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A HISTORY OF
RUSSIA



NICHOLAS II

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N. BRIAN CHANINOV

A HISTORY OF
RUSSIA

Translated from the French
by C. J. Hogarth



1930

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RUSSIA

1:19,500,000

English Miles

0 100 200 300

Kilometres

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

FROM the Carpathians and the German Oder there stretches to the Ural Mountains a vast tableland of low altitude. Studded with lakes and marshes, this tableland has its northern half covered with dense forest, and is cut up by great rivers into a series of plateaus whose gentle undulation betokens the simple structure of the subsoil. On the south and on the north this vast area is bounded by inland seas with narrow outlets. Of the seas in question, some are shallow, almost stagnant; others are deep and rough; whilst dominating the Volga, the country's principal river, there runs for several hundred kilometres a ridge which here and there attains a height of three hundred metres or more.

The uniformity of surface is reflected in the slight indenture of coast-line. Thus Russia represents a block heaped upon itself, lacking internal jointures. And the feature causes Russia's formation to contrast sharply with that of the rest of Europe. Also, for the reason that the warm ocean current which washes most of the rest of the European littoral reaches Russia only at her most northerly point, she is Europe's most essentially continental country, a country of long, cold winters and short, hot summers.

Russia is often compared, in climate, nature of soil, and geographical structure, with Canada and the United States regarded as one. And at first sight the comparison would appear justified, but less so when we note how much more homogeneous is the Russian plain than the American continent is uniform. For example, a feature peculiarly Russian lies in absence of natural "compartments" capable of sheltering national

or tribal individualism, "compartments" such as once the central plateau of France presented. In the United States that feature does not exist at all. There the terrain is seamed with huge incisions and sandy wastes which for centuries hindered the expansion of European colonization, or even rendered it impossible. No such feature exists in Russia: always the low-lying lands eastward of the Volga have, like the grassy, uniform steppes of the south, favoured migration, nomadism, a movement of coming and going which neither the country's great waterways nor the country's dense forests could arrest. True, at one period and another the centre's and the west's more marshy lands have impeded the colonizing movement, but even when Russia was first being peopled she had her isolated lakes as aids to, rather than as obstacles to inter-communication. And be it added that the oceans framing the continent of America impress the traveller quite otherwise than do Russia's semi-landlocked seas. Even before the European emigrant has set foot in the New World he will have imbibed from the ocean's billows a certain instinct for liberty, whereas the river-dwelling Russian has always felt such ocean distances to be unobtainable, yet, haunted with a yearning for them, found them recur to his soul during that soul's more grievous historical experiences.

The last point in this comparison is the climate. But there again the analogy is less than appears, for the Russian plain has never been as mild of temperature as Florida or California, and, vice versa, the United States and Canada have never known the extremes of the Orenburg steppes and the like. North America, too, enjoys that prolonged autumn known as "Indian summer," whereas in Russia, save in a few localities, autumn scarcely even has existence, and spring is short, and great heat succeeds suddenly to severe cold, and, as suddenly, severe cold succeeds to almost tropical heat.

In these extreme variations and quick changes lie the essential qualities of the Russian climate. And, conjoined with uniformity of terrain and immensity of space, those qualities have influenced in a peculiar way the psychology, the mentality, the beliefs, and the character of the Russian people. Nicholas I's dictum that "*Le climat, c'est moi*" (and never did a more glacial monarch reign in Europe!) was true. Russia's cold stimulates energy, and galvanizes the constitution, but also it may harbour beneath its leaden cloak inertia and sloth in their every form. Also, Russia's infinite spaces breed the tendency to "spiritual vacuum," to mental prostration, to the introspection so characteristic of the Russian. As furious in his anger he is as a blizzard, and as nebulous, indeterminate in his affections as a moonlit scene.

Thus Russia's brief summers never really warm either the body or the soul, and her civilization always has failed to burgeon in full: while a result of her geographical uniformity is a survival of socio-political forms elsewhere fallen into disuse. In no other country has environment played so large a part in social and individual formation and evolution. Geographical environment has been operative as regards this, but so also has ethnographical (and, therefore, historical) environment. Conformation of terrain has compounded Russia's prodigiously heterogeneous stocks and races into Russia as we know her now: and geographical features have determined both the formation and the evolution of her central power and the progress and the complexion of her historical events.

Also, for the reason that alike in Russia's climate, in her racial-compository process, and in her historical evolution the extreme, the accidental, and even the chaotic, have ruled, the Russian people has not yet, to quote Waliszewski's remark in a preface to a manual of Russian literature, "evolved an amalgam exclusive equally of arrogance and of weakness, of obstinacy and

of complacency, of rudeness and of servility, of defect of feeling and of excess of loving-kindness." And what deduction does Waliszewski derive from that? The deduction that if certain phases of individual or combined action on the part of certain traits in the Russian character chance mutually to harmonize, the result is violent spurts of energy and remarkable self-abnegatory deeds, but that if those phases chance not so to harmonize the result is abrupt, broken movement, and a reawakening of the human beast.

Such, in sum, is the thousand-year-old tragedy of Russia and her people. It is a people "displaced from orbit," "thrown out of balance." And, so far from undergoing crystallization with time, that people's mentality still is diffuse, vague, and intangible. Turgeniev wrote: "Russia is passing through the gaziform period: but never, I fear, will the planetary period reach her, since I can descry neither in her upper circles nor amongst her masses aught stable, solid, and compact."

More than half a century ago those words were written: yet they stand equally true to-day. Never let us, when studying the history of Russia and her people, forget the fact.

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A HISTORY OF
RUSSIA

CHAPTER I

ORIGINS

THE Slavs were not the original inhabitants of Russia: they did not settle there until centuries after the Finns had descended from the Urals, and the Scythians and the Sarmatians come from Central Asia, and the Bulgars from the Kama, and the Goths from the Niemen and the Vistula, and the Alanians and the Khozars from the Caspian and the Don.

During the seventh and eighth centuries of our era the Slavs pushed forward over the grassy plains of southern Russia (some of them from the Cis-Carpathians, and others from the basin of the Pripet and the western Bug) until they found themselves in a setting strongly tinged with orientalism, and with centuries-old influences which had reached the region from such Greek colonies on the Euxine as Olbia, Chersonesus, Panticapeum, and Tyras. In this new country they encountered towns (or beginnings of towns) whose commerce and civic life at least promised to increase and improve: and this feature especially it was that helped the Slavs to speedy assimilation of the manners and customs of the populations already settled and established in the south. Hitherto the Slavs had been merely petty husbandmen; but also they had in them a strongly marked instinct for commerce, industry, and barter, whilst, in addition, they cherished socio-political principles which led to them observing strictly the communal mode of life, and managing all their affairs in common, and allowing

individual possession only as regards fruits of personal labour. Hence inevitably the Slavs gravitated to such towns and urban centres as would afford scope for their special tastes and aptitudes. And thus it came about that Russia's early politico-economic evolution differed from that of Western Europe in springing primarily from commerce and the city. All Russia's early history is a history of struggle for the towns. And as seizure or construction of towns constituted the first principle of success, all Russia's early princes, on entering upon rule, made such seizure or construction their first business, as means either towards local power and popularity or towards subjection of the surrounding country.

Yet let us not exaggerate the point. Save for two or three exceptions, Russia's early towns long remained mere *bourgades*, as supports for power, and as socio-commercial centres to which a population engaged solely in barter and trade could resort. As yet, therefore, a rural Russia scarcely existed—the town was the State, and the State's whole political and economic activity was centred within town walls. Only when the Slavs had long been settled in Russia did agriculture come to play a non-negligible part in the country's life. We find no trace whatsoever of agricultural markets and private wealth in Russia's early town districts. And further proof of Slavic non-maintenance of agricultural-industrial depots is to be found in the strictly limited number of agricultural and domestic slaves which southern Russia possessed. Not that this means that in southern Russia slavery was non-existent. All that it means is that slaves were kept less for personal use than as material for the slave trade which formed Kievan Russia's most lucrative item of commerce.

But the Slavs were not the only immigrants to display a preference for towns. It was a preference shared also by the people of Scandinavia, who from the first evinced

it—they did so even before their *konungs*, or princes, reached Russia, and acquired Russian rule. Nevertheless the Scandinavian immigrants seem to have had little acquaintance with town *amenities* before they arrived in Russia: the fact is to be seen in their surprise at Russia's towns when they reached them, whilst further confirmation of this attitude of mind is the influence which the Russian setting exercised upon the word *gardr*. The word, in the country of its origin, meant just "enclosure," "fence," or "yard"; but in Russia it came to denote "city" as well, and evolved such names as Kænugardr (Kiev), Holmgardr (Novgorod), and Miklagardr (Veligrad¹—that is to say, Constantinople). And later, when the river route "from the Variagi to the Greeks"² came to be lined with towns and settlements doing an active trade with Scandinavia and Byzantium, the country as a whole became Gardarriki, or "the Kingdom of Towns," and was known as such for centuries.

The centre of the socio-political organization of the Slavs was the *obstchina*, the commune—practically the family enlarged, and a unit subject to a *Vietché*, or council (rather, assembly), of heads of *dvori*, households. But where several communes lay close to one another *volosts*, or cantons, were formed under assemblies of elders, with one such elder acting on a basis of hereditary right, or of seniority, or of election, or of superior authority, as the *volost's kniaz*, or prince or chieftain. Only in the event of threatened danger did all the cantons of a *plemia*, or tribe, join together under a temporary leader. Never was a permanent leader of the sort suffered.

Yet, whilst the Slavs advanced from the idea of the commune to the idea of a canton under an elder elected

¹ A corruption of Veliki Gorod, "Great Town."

² A quotation from Nestor's *Ancient Chronicle*. "Variagi" = Scandinavians.

by heads of families, or even, in case of need, of a temporary federation of tribal cantons as a whole (whilst refusing permanent existence to any authority above a cantonal *kniaz*), the notion of tribal, and, *a fortiori*, national unity still remained racially foreign to their ideas. The notion in question reached them only as the principle of personal rule reached them—from abroad, and as recommended to, or imposed upon, them by aliens.

The *Ancient Chronicle* (a work said to have been written by a monk of the Kievan-Petcherski Monastery named Nestor) tells us that when some Scandinavian *konungs* brought to the Slavo-Finnish domains warriors whom the Russians knew as “variagi” (from the Scandinavian *veregres*, or *varingas*, which means merely “soldiers”) they did so because the Slavs and the Finns requested them to set in order the Slavo-Finnish house, and then rule it. But the improbability of the tale need not be laboured. Always the Slavs’ socio-political ideal directly opposed the theory of personal government. And though sometimes they submitted temporarily to a foreign influence or a foreign authority if that influence or that authority promised ultimate benefit and cost nothing, or was imposed upon them either by force or by persuasion, and could, for the time being, be accepted with feigned resignation, they always sloughed it when it proved unprofitable, and generally did so at the moment least expected by the other side. Hence it is extremely improbable that they would ever have taken such a long step as the step from a request for foreign intervention in an emergency to a deliberate and permanent submission of themselves to such an intervention. This will be seen the more when we remember that never were the Slavs easily able to agree amongst themselves, or to arrive at a decision without going back upon it.

Yet if the author of the *Ancient Chronicle* represents

the Slavs as capable of acts and feelings little consorting with their nature, he did so with a purpose—he had his inventions dictated to him by the necessity of justifying and explaining to posterity the fact that the Scandinavian *konungs* who preceded the Russian Princes of Kiev and Novgorod so easily got Slavo-Finnish territory into their hands, and of furnishing an historical reason for those *konungs*' monopoly of power.

The Scandinavian *konungs*, or vikings, entered Russia at various points. Some of them ascended the Narva to settle around Lake Peipus. Others entered through the *embouchure* of the Dvina. And others, threading the archipelago of the Nevan delta, eventually moored their barques under the walls of Novgorod the Great, the free city of the north. *En route* this contingent found settled already around Lakes Peipus and Ilmen compatriots who had come thither as detached pioneers in advance. And inasmuch as Novgorod previously had been mentioned by Jornandes, historian of the Goths, as a place which Germans (near kinsmen of the inhabitants of Scandinavia) had founded, and which already possessed a municipal life akin to the municipal life of western Europe's large urban centres, and with it, a flourishing commerce destined eventually to procure for her membership of the Hanseatic League, the Novgorodian contingent of vikings at least did not find themselves wholly strangers in a strange land. True, the indigenous element had to be dealt with, but it was not very much united, nor yet very warlike. Probably quite a gentle pressure of iron hand in velvet glove served to render that element tractable, and to lead it to accept Scandinavian rule as a permanency. Nor would the aborigines be so stupid as not to see that peaceful co-existence with the newcomers would avail them best, or so forgetful as not to remember that the region's first fortunes had come of conquerors bearing thither manufactured goods and

gold. What probably occurred, therefore, was no real conquest or invasion, but a tacit agreement later confirmed by written deeds, in definition of the contracting parties' rights, obligations, and privileges.

Russian annals also tell us that the first Scandinavian to rule Novgorod was a viking named Rurik. Yet we have little precise information about this *konung*. Was he really the originator of the dynasty which for centuries has been legendarily ascribed to his name? We cannot say for certain. All that we can say is that later, when the city became an actual State, Rurik's successors maintained themselves there with difficulty, for there were constant feuds between the city and its cantons—the cantons sometimes submitting to the city's authority, and sometimes throwing it off again—and there was permanent antagonism between the idea of the city as a State and the Slavs' inborn aversion to constitutional rule, and there was the same permanency of friction between the city's *stariestchii*, or elders, aldermen, and the local masses. Indeed, all through Novgorod's history we see this condition of things, for ceaselessly the people showed hostility to the corporate spirit ever growing amongst the local plutocracy.

Yet though our information about Rurik amounts to little, it is otherwise with regard to a viking named Oleg, who incontestably is this transitional period's central figure. True, about him as well the tales are largely fables—they have popular tradition for their basis quite as much as they have written annals, and declare the salient points of his career to have been an expedition against Kiev, an expedition against Constantinople, a subjugation of Kievan Russia's tribes and cantons, and participation in long struggles between Kiev and Novgorod for commercial supremacy and command of the river route of the Dnieper—all of them related as is the story of Oleg's death, that is to say, in a

style of heroic legend; but at least the facts were ordinary enough. Thus, though the author of the *Ancient Chronicle* assigns to a single year Oleg's campaign against Kiev, his capture of Smolensk and Lubich, and his subjugation of certain tribes of Kiev, we know that in reality those events must have covered a much longer space of time, seeing that the river route "from the Variagi to the Greeks" was, as yet, difficult of navigation, and defended throughout by a tribe of Liakh, or Polish, origin which had pushed eastward a century earlier, and colonized the whole Upper Dnieperian watershed. The same barrier against invasion will account for the fact that Novgorod so long lay cut off from the territories of Southern Russia that it was not until the close of the tenth century that Byzantine civilization really reached Russia's northern half. Similarly do we know that, even when arrived in Kievan Russia, Oleg and his troops encountered there a population both hostile and numerous. Wherefore, to sum up, it is probable that Oleg's so-called conquest of Kiev was merely such a transference of power as happened at Novgorod—much parleying and bargaining taking place, but no bloodshed.

Once installed in Kiev, Oleg devoted himself to further war-making, to imposing taxes, to exacting tribute of neighbouring cantons, and to setting some more Russian tribes free of the Khazar yoke. His administrative methods, therefore, were those of his Kievan predecessors Askold and Dir,¹ and of his successor-descendants Igor and Sviatoslav. Yet neither he nor the latter succeeded in extending their authority over Russia's tribes and cantons as a whole. Always large masses of the Russian population remained outside that authority's scope save as regards decision of military or judicial differences. Similarly must Oleg's expedition

¹ Who, with vikings named Sineus and Truvor, are said to have accompanied Rurik from Scandinavia, and then gone south.

against Constantinople have been an invention on the part of the author of the *Ancient Chronicle*. Not a word about it do we find in the annals of Byzantium. Probably the treaty of commerce asserted to have been the expedition's happy outcome achieved signature without any preliminary fighting whatsoever. The document's very preamble states: "For many a year now hath peace and concord reigned between all the Christians of Rus." Indeed, we may wonder whether the treaty was signed during Oleg's term of rule at all. It may just as likely have been signed during some other. Our proof of the former is confined to statements contained in the document's Russian translation from the original Greek.

However, we find the personality of Oleg as strongly marked in legend as in the *Ancient Chronicle*. Particularly does the story of Oleg's ending (in passing, he was known as "Viestchnii," or "The Soothsayer") constitute a famous *skazanie*, or folk-tale. First attaining incorporation in Nestor's *Ancient Chronicle*, it, a century later, reappears, modified and readjusted, in an Irish saga, and lastly, through the genius of Pushkin, becomes immortalized into a poem that once a great *konung* of *variagi*, on going forth in search of the bones of a favourite charger, was bitten by a serpent which issued from the dead charger's skull, and died of the wound. The legend exists also in other countries. Slightly altered according to locality, it always has for central *motif* that destiny is inescapable. The Scandinavians undoubtedly received the legend from Russia, through their viking pioneers, for the Scandinavian version gives precisely the same details and *mise-en-scène* as the Russian. The Scandinavian work citing the legend, the *Orvard Odde Saga*¹ ("Orvard Odde" is, of course, "Oleg" Scandinavianized), represents Odde as experiencing the same stirring career as Oleg, and

¹ Or *Oerwar Odde Saga*.

loving his charger with an equal love, and being caused by identical circumstances to live long abroad, and, lastly, dying of the bite of a serpent lodged in the skull of the charger concerned. The first cycle of Russian history closes therefore, with a legend turning upon the ancient *Fatum*. Born in a sunlit land, the legend fades into the mists of the north, with, as an additional curious detail, the fact that in both of them the hero comes from the same country and belongs to the same race.

CHAPTER II

THE KIEVAN PERIOD

OLEG was succeeded by his nephew Ingvar—in Russian, Igor. The first thing which Igor had to do was to suppress a tribal rising. And then he had to fight some nomads known as Pechenegs. But he did not care for such “police work.” His ambition was, rather, to subdue the great, the wealthy Byzantium, and thereby refill his coffers, placate his native and foreign-mercenary troops, and increase locally his prestige. So in 941 he set forth with several hundred vessels, and after pillaging Byzantium’s Black Sea colonies, reached the Bosphorus. But there disaster awaited him and, overwhelmed with “Greek fire,” he and the remnants of his armada were lucky in ever regaining Kiev. Three years later he mustered fresh bands of *variagi*, added to them some thousands of nomads, and once more started for Constantinople. This time he journeyed overland; but as before, he encountered only failure. Finally, met in the Danubian delta by envoys from the Byzantine Emperor, he was glad to accept a substantial ransom, and depart homeward.

After this he did not live long to enjoy Byzantium’s bounty. Once again avarice proved his undoing. Visiting a recalcitrant Slavo-Drevlian tribe for exaction of fresh tribute, he was seized by the tribesmen, bound between two young trees bent earthward, and torn asunder through the trees’ release.

For wife he had taken unto himself a Scandinavian princess named Helga (Olga, in Russian), and by her

had a son—Sviatoslav. After the Drevlians' murder of her husband Olga headed his warriors against them, slew of them a full tenth, burnt many of their settlements, ravaged their crops, and imposed a heavy toll both in cash and in kind. Then she went to Novgorod for institution of a better system of collection of taxes and tribute, but she was not, despite this, a woman either revengeful or avaricious: rather, she aspired only to lead a virtuous, unselfish life. For instance, in 962, after overhearing members of her retinue discussing the merits of the Christian religion, she had the already numerous Christian community of Kiev questioned on the subject, and as the result, sent to Otho the Great, Emperor of Germany, a request that he would choose of his subjects missionaries fit for Russia's wholesale instruction in the faith. And acceding to the request, he bade Archbishop Wilhelm of Mayence dispatch a band of monks under one Adalbert of the Treves Monastery of Saint Maxim. But Russia's chieftains and people were not yet ready for such a religion. All that happened was that they killed some of Adalbert's companions, maltreated Adalbert himself, and forced him and the rest to return whence they had come.

Meanwhile word concerning Olga had reached Byzantium, and in time the emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, invited her upon a visit. True, he may have done this with an *arrière pensée* in his mind, for since the bargain in the Danubian delta Byzantium had been working ceaselessly to get a finger into Russian politics, and, in commissioning the deceased Igor to supervise the nomads of the steppes, and ward them off Byzantium's colonies in the Crimea, Constantinople had practically converted that prince into a Byzantine vassal; but at all events Olga accepted the emperor's invitation, and reaching Constantinople in 967, had audience of the emperor, and was accorded a seat at the table of the high guests (*gosti*), close to the empress's,

at a gala banquet, and had the festivity repeated for her benefit three days later. These details the emperor's literary works themselves record. But unlike the *Ancient Chronicle*, they make no mention of Olga being baptized at Constantinople, and none of an alliance being concluded between the two States. Probably, therefore, Olga was not baptized until she had returned home. And as regards any Russo-Byzantine alliance, such a step would have been directly opposed to the views both of Olga and of her son. True, a few years later the son gave the Byzantine Emperor (who by that time was Nicephorus Phocas) help against a rising of the Southern Bulgars, and sacked some Bulgarian settlements; but also there remains the fact that he made his next proceeding assumption of rule over the Bulgars on his own account, and continuance of that rule until, through a clever ruse of inciting nomads to attack Sviatoslav's home city of Kiev, the Byzantine emperor at length induced the Russian prince to reseek his capital. However, in 971, as the prince still remained bent upon seeing his seat of government transferred to the Balkans, he commissioned his three sons to act as administrators of Kiev in his coming absence, and, again crossing the Danube, once more invaded Bulgaria. But this time there were standing beside the Bulgars the Greeks, and the fact came near to causing another Russian debacle. Fortunately, Byzantium cared less for fighting than did her Bulgarian allies, and soon she initiated peace negotiations, and once more the prince returned homeward. And it may have been disappointment over this that, in the following year, sent him, next, against the Pechenegs, for their deprivation of the command of the Dnieper Rapids. At all events, the resultant struggle ended in his being slain, and his skull converted into a drinking-cup for Pecheneg warriors.

Earlier Maliucha, a servant-girl employed by his

mother, had borne him a son Vladimir. And though Vladimir thus came of an irregular union, and was looked down upon as a bastard by his brothers, he possessed such gaiety and charm as in time to overcome opposition, and become his father's favourite. Finally, when the father was about to depart upon his second expedition to Bulgaria, and entrusted the *interim* administration of Kiev to Vladimir's brothers, he assigned to Vladimir himself the important post of viceroy of turbulent Novgorod. It is difficult to say how Vladimir would have fared at Novgorod if he had had only his own resources to help him; but, as it was, he fell in there with Dobrynia, brother to his mother the servant-girl Maliucha, and appointed him his *voevoda* (military commandant). True, Dobrynia was a rude, licentious peasant only, and one who exercised anything but a good moral influence upon the prince; yet also he had in him wit and ingenuity. Then, on Sviatoslav being slain by the Pechenegs in 971, and Sviatoslav's eldest son, Yaropolk, coming to rule the country at large, this Yaropolk sought to ensure that rule's retention by himself through the method of having his next eldest brother, Oleg, assassinated: and, upon that, Vladimir conceiving that if he remained in Novgorod, a like fate would remove himself as well, fled to Sweden, and lived there until 973. Then reseeking Novgorod with Scandinavian mercenaries fired with promises of unlimited booty, he had the satisfaction of seeing the city open her gates to him in haste, and, after halting there just long enough to muster Novgorod's available freebooters and cut-throats, proceeded on his way southward, in the direction of Kiev. Now it chanced that his route thither led through Polotsk, a small principality of which a Nordman named Rogvolod was the proprietor: and whereas, in the ordinary course, nothing might have happened there, Rogvolod, as things were, had a daughter Rognieda, and Rognieda already



VLADIMIR, GRAND DUKE OF KIEV

was the fiancée of Vladimir's elder brother Yaropolk, and as soon as Vladimir set eyes upon her he too wanted her for wife. But Rognieda in no way felt the same about it. "*Né razouiu syna rabitchistcha*," she said—"Never am I going to become unbooter to a slave-woman's son." And on this contemptuous reference to Vladimir's mother being reported to that mother's brother, Dobrynia, the fact meant that Polotsk and its proprietor were doomed. Sure enough, the enraged Novgorodian *voevoda* slew Rogvolod and his sons out of hand, and Vladimir, for his part, carried off Rognieda, and she became the third of his many consorts.

When Kiev was reached the city's resistance proved short-lived, and Yaropolk, her prince, was put to death in his late father's palace at Rodno. And now the victor stood sole master of Kiev. Yet, even so, his work was not finished. At once his Scandinavian mercenaries began to grumble at not having received all the booty promised, and Vladimir had to consult Dobrynia as to how to deal with them, and on advice from Dobrynia, started a portion of the malcontents upon the road to Byzantium, and meanwhile sent the emperor word of their coming, and also a request that they should never return. And to others he promised fresh warfare, and luckily obtained a chance of it through some Slavo-Finnish tribes of the Oka attempting to deny his new authority, and having to be brought to book. In the same way, when his Scandinavian comrades-in-arms needed again to be kept quiet he led them to the Kama and the Middle Volga, and set them to plunder the wealthy country of the Kaman Bulgars, who traded largely in gems and gold from the Urals.

The primitive Slavs' religion was based upon, firstly, worship of certain forces of nature and secondly, a cult of ancestors. And in their pantheon the principal deity was Perun, as the god of thunder. The Baltic tribes, however, who sometimes came into contact with other

ances, also learnt the construction of idols and temples, and instituted colleges for their priests. In southern Russia idols did not make their appearance until comparatively late. And when they did so it was the result, not of native, but of Scandinavian, influence. Until 988 Vladimir himself remained a pagan. Previously to that he crowned the heights surrounding Kiev with crude representations of Perun and Dajborg and Khorse,¹ and was imitated in this by Dobrynia at Novgorod. Also, he built temples in his capital to those gods, and (according to *The Saga of Olaf Trygvason*) fulfilled personally the duties of sacrificiant—once, in particular, it is said, he offered in sacrifice two members of the very Church which later was to add his name to her hagiology! Safely may we discount as a fable the *Ancient Chronicle's* statement that when he too became minded to join the Christian Communion he first sent envoys to Bulgaria, Rome, and Byzantium, and had inquiry made into those countries' faiths. We may similarly discount the *Ancient Chronicle's* (Laurentian Version) statement as to the motives which led him to choose Chersonesus (now Kherson) for the scene of his baptism at the hands of Greek priests, and also to marry the Princess Anna, sister of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II. The motives for these steps which the *Ancient Chronicle* cites are in no way borne out by the records of Byzantium itself. More probably the prince owed his "conversion" to considerations of political economy. Christian baptism, be it remembered, was a thing likely to ingratiate him in Byzantium's eyes. And thereby fresh outlets for Kievan wares and produce might be obtained. Also, just then the Byzantine emperor was fearing an outbreak on the part of Bardas Scleros and Bardas Phocas, and in 988 he did actually ask for Vladimir's help against those rebels, and conclude an agreement

¹ Gods, the two latter of the sun. Other deities of the sort were Svarog, god of the sky, and Stribog, god of the winds.

whereby the Kievan prince was, for a certain number of years, to hold six thousand men at Byzantium's disposal, and be granted in return, the hand of the Princess Anna, the emperor's sister. Then the rebels were defeated at Chrysopolis on the Bosphorus (the modern Scutari), and upon that the emperor showed signs of a meditated evasion of the promise, on the ground that his sister had no mind to become matched with "such a barbarian"; but Vladimir promptly besieged Byzantium's town of Chersonesus, forced the emperor to yield to him, carried off the princess to Kiev, and initiated a general Christian conversion of his subjects by Greek clergy.

The baptism of the Kievans in particular seems to have been carried out almost in military fashion. First Vladimir bade the local idols be thrown into the Dnieper. Then he bade his people enter the water. Lastly, he had the Greek priests who had baptized himself at Chersonesus read prayers. Unfortunately, just as they were finishing he perceived that the image of Perun had caught upon the river bank instead of falling into the water headlong, and also that already some of his people were so far forgetting that they had just become Christians as to be making gestures of adoration in the recalcitrant god's direction: wherefore he had the faithful dispersed by force, and the god consigned to a burning-pile.

About the evangelization of the rest of Russia we know still less, if possible: we know merely that such strong measures had to be adopted at Novgorod as to leave behind them the saying that, "whilst Putiata did baptize us with iron, Dobrynia hath now baptized us with fire." But how indifferent to the Christian faith the Novgorodians long remained is seen from the fact that a *Voprostchenie*, or *Interrogation*, which a deacon-domesticus of the Monastery of Saint Anthony (one Cyril) wrote in the twelfth century declares

Novgorod's women still to have been taking their children impartially to the local Catholic mission house and to the local Byzantine churches. And the same at Rostov, where in 1070, attempted introduction of Christianity provoked reprisals of the sort that when Ivan Vyatcheslav, the local commandant, hanged and burnt some native augurs who had been inciting the people against the faith, the Rostovians retorted by driving out of the place Theodor and Ilarion, Russia's first two missionary bishops, whilst a few years later a third bishop of the sort, Leo, was put to death by them. Like incidents occurred at Murom as well. There the people persistently remained pagan. And thence many of the richer citizens joined the Bulgars of the Kama, and turned to Mohammedanism. Only around Kiev did the pliant, docile local Slavs treat their Christian priests decently. Not that even as to that we have reliable documentary evidence. In sum, we know for certain that in the north and the west Russia's Slavo-Finnish tribes long and fiercely opposed Christianity—did so until the Church, realizing that she must proceed more cautiously and cunningly if she was ever to cleanse the country's population of its pagan ritual and idolatry, and to shatter its basis of ancient tradition, acted as had been done elsewhere: she, the Church, confined herself to conserving intact such of the people's misapplied religious energy as at least promised possibilities of purification, and to using that energy towards adoption of the new tenets through the method of substituting for idols the saints of the Christian calendar, for pagan sacrifices the Christian Sacraments, and for the cult of fetishes an adoration of Christian icons and relics. Yet still evangelization progressed slowly: the Russian character still was too fundamentally opposed to such a process for that process to be speedy. And a further obstacle to the work of Byzantium's monks and priests lay in those monks' and priests' commission to introduce,

in addition to the religious ideal, Byzantium's political ideal that in this world all power had its basis in divine right alone, and that the temporal should always work hand in hand with the spiritual. In the result, Byzantium's missionaries found themselves forced first to cultivate the popular intellect. Only when that had been done could they tend the popular soul. In the beginning they failed in the former. They failed in it even in Kiev, so impregnated with the democratic spirit, even there, the masses were—so jealous of their common rights and liberties. Only centuries later did Byzantium's legacy come really to be adopted, to be respected. That was when the policy of the later Muscovite rulers had so modified the Slavic socio-political ideal as radically to weaken its democratic theory, and so prepare the Central Russian descendants of Russia's original, Russia's Slavo-Finnish-Turanian, population for acceptance outright of Eastern notions.

Yet Vladimir could, for all his cruelty, high-handedness, and immorality, govern well and prudently. This is clear from the fact that, whilst his many wives presented him in all with twenty-five children, and that he therefore had that number to provide for, he so far knew how to avail himself of the circumstance that Russia had not yet cut herself off from the rest of the world (and Kiev, in particular, still was known abroad through visiting traders, and through princely relations with alien heads of States) as, in defiance of his European reputation for "barbarism," to marry off some of his issue to highly desirable European *partis*. Thus, one of his sons, Sviatopolk, he wedded to a daughter of Boleslav I of Poland. His son Yaroslav he wedded to Princess Inguiguerda, the King of Sweden's daughter. One of his own daughters he wedded to Bernhard, Margrave of Nordmark. Another daughter he wedded to Ladislaus I of Hungary. And a third daughter he wedded to Casimir I of Poland. In short, he caused

the Rurikevitch dynasty to become allied, through marriage, with half the reigning houses of Europe. Yet, of his posterity, only his son Yaroslav has left a real mark upon history. Not that Yaroslav, even so, was either a model son or an obedient vassal. We see these two shortcomings in the fact that after his father's division of the Russian land amongst his heirs, when Yaroslav was awarded Novgorod, Yaroslav had no sooner installed himself in his domain than he adopted an independent policy, and, with his Novgorodians (who had long disliked the idea of Kiev as their suzerain), refused to pay Kiev any more tribute. The news of this provoked Vladimir into resolving to make Yaroslav a veritable example. But though, as a preliminary to marching upon Novgorod, he had all the roads and bridges *en route* put into repair, he died before a start could be made, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sviatopolk.

Sviatopolk began his reign by, as a step towards obviating any possible rivalry, having his three locally available brothers, Boris, Gleb, and Sviatoslav, killed off—a deed which led Yaroslav hastily to compound with his Novgorodians over an outstanding difference as to his protection of his Novgorodian-Scandinavian bodyguard whenever they thieved and otherwise misbehaved themselves, and then to march against his Kievan brother. And when Sviatopolk, after meeting him with an army at Lubich, was defeated and fled for refuge to his father-in-law's (King Boleslav's) dominions of Poland, Yaroslav installed himself in Kiev in his stead, and claimed authority over the country as a whole. Sviatopolk, however, was not to be beaten so easily. Inducing his father-in-law to lend him an army, he soon, with that father-in-law, was back before the gates of Kiev, and, after overcoming Kiev's garrison, compelled Yaroslav to make a precipitate return to his own city of Novgorod. Then Yaroslav again

mustered an army, once more worsted Sviatopolk, and once more started him for Poland. On the way thither, however, Sviatopolk died, and from 1019, for a while, Yaroslav remained Kievan ruler undisputed. Then came trouble, inevitably, again. It did so because, although, to quote the *Ancient Chronicle*, "Yaroslav might now have looked to dry his sweat, and the sweat of his warriors," there arose a dispute with his nephew, Brietcheslav of Polotsk, over the question of who, properly, ought to be governor of Novgorod. In the end Brietcheslav was chastised and the affair liquidated; but almost at once Kiev's ruler fell out with his younger brother, Mstislav, because though the latter owned for a principality the fertile Khanate (so-called) of Tmutara (an area lying between the Don and the Sea of Azov), the said Mstislav all at once announced his intention of enlarging that principality at Kiev's expense, and, marching against Yaroslav, defeated him and put him to flight. Only because Mstislav then was seized with a chivalrous impulse, and sent his brother word that, after all, he would not molest Kiev, but let his brother return thither in peace, was Yaroslav enabled (though first of all, being suspicious, he mustered a new army against accidents) to regain possession of his rightful seat.

Also, Yaroslav had to contend not only with native foes, but with alien—amongst them, the Asiatic hordes which for a century past had made the southern steppes their prey. Again, there occurred a renewal of strife with Byzantium, and it required a prolonged battle off Varna, on the coast of Bulgaria, finally to put Byzantium's fleet to flight. Thus Yaroslav's career was almost wholly made up of warfare. And the fact seems the more astonishing when we remember that in history his fame rests less upon that than upon his legislative work, and his piety, and his love of literature, and his achievements in the province of architecture.

Thus between two campaigns he actually could make time to give Kiev her Cathedral of Saint Sophia, and to decorate it through the medium of Byzantine artists. Also, he re-walled his capital and graced the wall with a golden gate of no less merit than the similar gate at Constantinople. Also, as a man of letters *par excellence*, and one able to speak several languages, he gave Kiev a library of splendid proportions, and had it housed in one of the annexes of the cathedral. Also, that Byzantine interference in Church matters might to a certain extent be done away with, he formed an order of clergy of purely Russian origin. And lastly, he was the first Russian ruler to systematize Russia's laws and quasi-legal customs, and to collate them into a *Recueil*, or Digest, and thus to give his country the *Russkaia Pravda*, or famous *Book of Russian Right*, a code to which, during the twelfth century, certain successors of his, and notably Vladimir Monomakh, were destined to append additions. In sum, Kiev had, by the time of Yaroslav's death, come to be looked upon amongst foreigners as almost rivalling Byzantium.

Yaroslav's marriage with Princess Inguiguerda of Sweden had given him six sons and three daughters. In 1051 one daughter married Henri I of France. And in 1060, on Henri's death, she married Count Raoul de Crespy et de Valois. Another daughter married Harald of Norway. And, of the sons, three ruled Kiev in succession. Yet only one had issue able to mark history and legend. This was Vsevolod, whose son, sometimes known as Vladimir II, but more usually as Vladimir Monomakh, came to be a brave soldier and a fearless huntsman, and legislatively to champion the oppressed. As Vladimir Monomakh, be it said, he derived his title from his Byzantine mother, who also had been a Monomakh, and not, as customarily asserted, from any victory over a Genoese prince in the tilting yard. His reign's outstanding feature lies in the fact

that it was then that his Slavo-Russian subjects began tentatively to stutter in letters, and national records to be compiled, and also certain *zhitia* (biographies) of Russian saints, and also accounts of travels in Palestine, and biographies of prominent lay dignitaries. In his time, too, such towns as Yaroslav and Yuriev (Dorpat) were founded, and acquired fine churches and monasteries and some excellent schools. And further proof of the prince's love for literature as well as for piety is seen in the *Nastavlenie*, or *Injunction*, which he composed for the benefit of his children by Guida, or Gytha, daughter of Harold II of England. In this document he bids his heirs never to cease to strive after self-education, and refers them for an example to his father Vsevolod, who despite his many other cares acquired proficiency in five languages. Also, the writer insists that hospitality should be shown to all, and in bounteous measure. And lastly, he recommends that punishment by death be abolished.

Vladimir Monomakh was Russia's last purely Kievan grand prince, for Yaroslav's deathbed division of his dominions amongst his heirs initiated a period of anarchy and violence wherein minor principalities constantly kept arising, and Yaroslav's various sons and grandsons constantly kept trying to rid themselves of Kiev's suzerainty. In the course of forty-four years, indeed, no fewer than eighteen Kievan grand princes succeeded one another, with each such change involving a renewal of strife. The root cause of this was the complexity of the successional system, as a factor due to the ever-growing complement of princes extant, and to complication of succession in the direct line (the only system which could have kept trouble absent) with a principle whereby all the extant House of Rurik came to consider that it had a rotational right to rule—a Grand Prince of Kiev no sooner dying than not only his eldest son, but also all his surviving younger

brothers, claimed the grand princeship. The outcome of this, at last, was that one day a group of cadet princes, princes of the House's younger branch who, having outlived their seniors of that branch, had themselves become the branch's seniors, propounded a claim to the grand princeship and the Kievan suzerainty equally with three princes of the direct line who then were ruling at, respectively, Kiev, Chernigov, and Periaslavl, despite that the cadet princes in question were but grand-nephews of those three ruling princes, and so lacked juridical title not only to the status of a grand prince, but even to style as such. Nevertheless these cadet princes' claim ultimately was recognized: and from that time onwards they ceased to attend at Kiev for personal rendition of fealty—instead they sent thither from their appanages (which were situated far in the north of Russia) mere representatives — sometimes kinsmen, sometimes, even, only officials. And this innovation each Grand Prince of Kiev, from that time forth, made an excuse for fresh exercise of fire and the sword.

Equally confused and thorny did the situation arising from the purely political position become. The governmental system of Kiev had for its basis authority exercised partly by the grand prince, and partly by the *Vietché* of the city—a last surviving relic of the Kievan-Slavic commune. And this dual exercise of authority caused the relations between its two organs always to lack a durable, a good working, foundation. In theory the duties of the *Vietché* were to select the new grand prince after each grand-princely demise, formally to invite him to rule, to declare war, to conclude peace, to control internal policy, and to frame new laws. But, as things worked out, the absence of legislation precisely fixing manner of election to the *Vietché*, the *Vietché's* duties, the *Vietché* personnel, and the periods during which the *Vietché* should sit, brought it

about that often enough the prince elected himself over the *Vietché's* head, ruled purely as he chose, proclaimed laws, declared war, and concluded peace, despite that he had to do all this at his own risk, seeing that he had no absolute power for his backing, and constantly had to fear inadvertently arousing the people to agitate for its just rights. Naturally such a system opened the door to every sort of arbitrariness, caprice, and corruption, and made the governmental machine jerk and halt in its functioning and, at least from the close of the eleventh century onwards, debarred Kiev from exercise of much of the influence which she ought to have exerted, and from enjoyment of much of the prosperity which her geographical position as the nodal point of Russia's eastward-westward commercial routes rendered her due, seeing that with the very first Kievan upheavals there became initiated a process of deflection of international trade to routes safer, directer, and more economical. But it was not this alone that brought about a decline of Kiev: the supreme factor in her decay was rise of new principalities which became centres having a social life, interests, and aspirations not only exclusively their own, but directly opposed to the social life, interests, and aspirations of Kiev. Hence, when the Pechenegs who roamed between the Don and the Danube added to destruction of the steppes' Russian settlements a raid to the gates of Kiev herself, the city escaped like destruction only by a miracle and, even so, was soon afterwards subjected to fire and pillage by Prince Andrew Bogoliubski, of Rostov and Suzdal, and compelled to see finally depart northward her accumulated wealth of centuries.

With this crowning calamity primitive Russia, the State created by Vladimir and Yaroslav, came practically to an end. And Kiev's eclipse spelt more than the ruin of the city itself. It spelt also the ruin of southern Russia at large. Indeed, in 1240, when Kiev

was next assailed (by Batu and his horde), the assault only emphasized the finale of a stripped capital, a depopulated countryside, and a decayed commonwealth. In altogether another latitude, the latitude productive of the Great Russian stock, was the Russia of the future destined to arise.

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The Kievan period of our history is peculiarly interesting in that it presents us with a full and complete cycle of historical phenomena. But there exists no direct succession of social and political orders between that remote epoch and the ages which followed it. All that there exists is an ethnographical continuity, in that when the old Slavo-Russian tribes left the historical arena they gave birth to, or served as elements for, new ethnographical units for joint assurance of Russia's future. Thus the remnants of the Slavic populations of old Volhynia and Galicia which survived the struggle against the southern nomads became the *cadres* of the Little Russian people and, from the thirteenth century to the eighteenth, re-spread themselves over the Ukrainian plain which Turkish and Mongolian invasions had ravaged. And in another direction the very ancient Slavic tribe of the Krivitchi became the ancestors of the White Russians. And lastly, encounters of Novgorod's people with descendants of the ancient Antes and various Finnish tribes gave birth to, amongst northern Russia's forests, lakes, and swamps, the Great Russian stock.

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCIPALITY OF ROSTOV-SUZDAL

ALTHOUGH Slavic colonization of north-western Russia began very early, climatic conditions and nature of soil greatly retarded the process. Not until the close of the eleventh century, when the disorder in Kiev started a northward emigration movement of Kievan refugees in search of better security of subsistence, did fresh northern towns become added to the existent towns of Novgorod, Bielo-Ozero, Rostov, Suzdal, and Murom, and the Great Russian stock, the largest (though also the youngest and the least pure-blooded) member of the Slavonic family, attain evolution. The circumstances of this northern colonization, being peculiar, produced a peculiar political situation. For one thing its leaders, being princes desirous of seats of rule more safe than Kiev, and holders no longer of Kievan aspirations, became automatically, in the new region, great landed proprietors, and ceased to lack patrimonies, and to hold their thrones at their subjects' mercy, but, rather, came to administer domains (known as *udieli*, appanages) bequeathable in family tail male. This gave them every incentive to extend and improve their domains. Yet also a result was constantly to increase the number of competent heirs. Hence eventually appanages began to be divided and re-divided. At first there was in the north-west but one chief principality, with the town of Vladimir for its capital and, for its constituent portions, appanages, of respectively, Rostov, Periaslavl, Yuriev, and Starodub. But at approximately the

middle of the thirteenth century this chief principality gave birth to new appanages of Suzdal, Kostroma, and Moscow, whilst simultaneously each of the existing appanages of Rostov and Periaslavl became divided into two. The outcome of this partitive process of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was creation of a multitude of new appanage interests, of a great deal of "parochial patriotism," and of princely alliances based upon economic rather than upon political considerations. Everywhere the growing needs of a young principality kept forcing the owner more and more to look to his domain's industrial productivity and to clear his land of its indigenous forest. And, again, this process necessitated more and more working-hands, and for those working-hands' local retention the princes had to make their labour contracts permit of migration only on the contracts' conclusion. In those days the local Russian population was, in the main, divided into two classes: into a landowning class of princes, *boyars*,¹ monasteries, and princes' retainers, and into a landworking class containing, firstly, a category of peasant farmers who held their lands on rental, and, secondly, a category of agricultural employees pure and simple. The region's urban population constituted merely a minority. Nor was the rooted urban spirit of the south existent, save in embryo, in the north. True, for a while the institution of the *Vietché*, or communal assembly, continued in being; but at last it too yielded to the appanage prince's authority, and thenceforth he ruled either alone or with the help of a *duma*, or council, composed of a few of his appanage's leading dignitaries—a council assembling only when the prince personally asked it to do so, and not necessarily having its advice adopted. All the same, the idea of a centralized Russia under a single monarchical-autocratic grand prince still was being conceived, and was ultimately to come to birth.

¹ The then equivalent of nobles.

He who now most aided the process of conception was Rostov's grand prince, Andrew Bogoliubski.

When Vladimir I divided his dominions amongst his heirs he assigned to his son Yaroslav the principality of Rostov. And when, after the death of Yaroslav's elder brothers, Yaroslav again became Grand Prince of Kiev he founded the town which bears his name to this day. Lastly, in 1097 all the princes of the Rurikévitch family met at Lubich, and awarded Rostov (which by now had been increased with the principality of Suzdal) as a perpetual patrimony for Vladimir Monomakh and his heirs. But as Vladimir Monomakh's duties at Kiev proved to be such as to prevent him from ever personally visiting Rostov and Suzdal, the latter's first independent ruler was Yurii Dolgoruki,¹ son of Vladimir Monomakh. And in time Yurii thought that he would like to be more than Rostov's ruler, that he would like to rule Kiev herself, even though he belonged but to the cadet, the junior, branch of the family. Three times he lodged himself upon the throne of Kiev, and three times he was ousted thence. Until in 1155, on the death of Isiaslav, the reigning prince, Yurii was enabled by this removal of his leading adversary permanently to carry through his cherished enterprise. In the struggle he had always received good support from Andrew, his second son: wherefore now, at the end of the eight years' fighting, he decided to reward this son, and gave him the Kievan-suburban appanage of Vychgorod. But Andrew hankered after a return to his native Rostov-Suzdal: and at last he left his southern domain and started northward. The only memento of his late appanage which he took with him was an icon of the Virgin which (so it was alleged) Saint Luke himself had painted. And when, says the *Ancient Chronicle*, he had arrived within a few *versts* of the town of Vladimir the horse upon which the icon

¹ = George the Long-Armed, or Long-Handed.

was laden suddenly halted, and could not be made to proceed farther. Whereupon Andrew took this to be meant as a sign from heaven, and, selecting the spot for his seat of residence, built there a palace named Bogoliubovo, or "The Place Beloved of God," and in time received from history the same name as he had bestowed upon his dwelling.

Nevertheless Andrew's father could not understand his son's attachment to a remote locality like Rostov, and, to punish him for his departure from Vichgorod without leave, bade the people of Rostov and Suzdal swear allegiance, not to Andrew (whom, however, he still named as heir to the Kievan grand princeship), but to his younger brothers Michael and Vsevolod. Soon afterwards, in 1157, Yurii died, and at once the people of Rostov and Suzdal expelled the two younger princes, and asked Andrew to become their lord, and so to remain. Andrew agreed, and made his first administrative act a wholesale eviction of his relatives—brothers, nephews, cousins, and all—from the neighbourhood, so that no one should be on hand to dispute his sole authority. Besides, he aspired to more yet: he aspired to make his domain the nodal point of all Russia, and, at that, a wholly new and reconstructed Russia. But, for the time being, he sought to avoid seeming favouritism of either Rostov or Suzdal by choosing for his political seat the town of Vladimir—the more so as its situation at a point where the Oka receives an important tributary, and whence the Volga is not far distant, made it peculiarly suitable as a stronghold. Also Andrew had the advantage of having no privileged aristocracy in his domains, and of ruling a people which had long since ceased to meet in *Vietché*, and so of being free of the two particular institutions which most might have checked his aspirations to independent governance.

Next he built churches at Bogoliubovo and Vladimir,

and had them decorated by Byzantine artists. Also he enlarged the Kreml (citadel) of Vladimir, and repaired the town's ramparts and fitted them with gates precisely reproducing those of Kiev. Nevertheless he considered that his principality could become the centre of all Russia's activity only when Kiev's political supremacy was ended, and the chief spiritual authority in the land transferred to the north. Hence he begged of Byzantium an independent metropolitan, but the Patriarch there, the sole legal nominator of Russia's ecclesiastical dignitaries, refused on the ground that there was a metropolitan already in Kiev, and one was enough. Andrew, however, a ruler who already had expelled one bishop from Suzdal for interdicting consumption of flesh food on festival days coinciding with a Wednesday or a Friday, sought another excuse for his designs upon Kiev, and eventually found it in a difference about nominating a new governor for Novgorod. So in 1169 he and eleven other local princes marched southward and, as we have seen already, put Kiev to fire and the sword, evicted her grand prince, finally annulled her suzerain authority, and scorning to do more, converted her into an appanage for one of Andrew's younger brothers.

Andrew's later years were spent almost wholly in conflict with his kinsfolk and the turbulent Novgorodians. Probably this was because in his old age he constantly sought to increase his authority. At all events, it is difficult to assign to any other factor his tragic, ignominious end at the hands of conspirators. One night these conspirators, under a certain Yakim Kutchkov, entered the palace by different doors, fortified themselves in the wine cellar, and broke into the prince's chamber. The instant that their entry awakened him he reached for the sword which usually hung at his bed-head, but that night it had previously been removed by Anibal (or Hannibal), his butler, the conspirators' confederate. Yet, even so, despite that he was sixty-

two or sixty-three years of age, the prince had sufficient strength and activity to put up a long and desperate resistance before numbers brought him to the floor in a swoon. Then, in the pitch darkness of the room the conspirators, believing him to be not swooning, but dead outright, picked up by mistake the body of a comrade killed by a chance blow, and were in the act of removing it when from the darkness there came a groan. Halting, the conspirators contrived to kindle a torch. And then they discovered the prince stretched at the foot of a pillar. "Verily, this time thine account shall be closed!" Yakim Kutchkov exclaimed as he slashed off the prince's right arm before finally dispatching him. "O Lord," were Andrew's last words, "into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" Dawn now was breaking, so the conspirators threw the body out of the window into the garden, and then descended and, as they thought, disposed of it. And as, after sending emissaries into the town to discover how the people were taking the first news of the deed, word was brought back that the people were displaying indifference, the conspirators next murdered several members of the palace retinue and then, issuing into the streets, did the same by certain prominent town officials, pillaged those officials' mansions, and even stripped the foreign artists who were engaged in decorating the new cathedral. Only later in the day did an old Kievan servant of Andrew's named Kuzma discover his master's body. Wrapping it in a sheet, he bore it to the cathedral and deposited it upon the entrance-steps, since by that time the attendants in charge of the building were drunk, and would not let him enter. And there for two days the body lay. Then a monk named Arsenius arrived, and made the attendants open the doors and bear within the corpse. Six days later a lying-in-state was held. And then at last the people, on beholding their prince upon his bier under the princely standard,

did break forth into lamentation, and with tears recall the good which the prince had wrought despite his severity.

Inasmuch as Andrew died without having appointed an heir (Yurii, his eldest son, had married the famous Queen of Georgia, Tamara, and the next three had predeceased their father), the grand principship of Rostov passed to Vsevolod, Andrew's younger brother, a man known also as "Bolshoe Gnezdo" ("The Great Nest"). However, he did not accede unopposed. He was enabled to render his position secure only when the people had seized certain *boyars* who were hostile to his cause, and delivered them, bound, to emissaries sent by the prince for their reception. His reign lasted until 1212, and throughout it he continued his late brother's policy. One of the items of that policy was maintenance of good relations with Novgorod; but here he invariably failed, so stubbornly did the Novgorodians detest the Rostovians, and so stubbornly did the Rostovians pray for Novgorod's independence to fall as Kiev's had done. Again and again did Vsevolod find himself forced to curb encroachments on the part of the great commercial city. An instance is that once when, to teach the Novgorodians a lesson of real sternness, he besieged their leading trading centre of Torzhok and then, not really wishing to harm the place, proposed a raising of the investment, his men cried out: "O Prince! Have we but come hither for purposes of embracings?" and their commander was forced to sack the town outright.

On his death the principality largely underwent subdivision amongst heirs, and we observe the phenomenon (a phenomenon rare indeed for the appanage period!) that those heirs indulged in no serious brawling over the process. In fact, the period of the next ruler's, Yurii's, sway (1212-38) constituted a sort of Suzdalian-Rostovian golden age. During it the towns of Ustug and Nizhni Novgorod were founded, letters and arts

flourished, popular education advanced, new churches (decorated, now, by native, not Byzantine, craftsmen) arose, a certain Princess Euphrosyne founded a school for girls, and monasteries became rich in Greek and other precious manuscript translations.

Then the still-continuous subdivision of the principality amongst heirs led to a decline of the several portions, and Ivan Kalita, proprietor of the neighbouring appanage of Moscow, had but to offer a sum for any portion for that portion's impoverished prince at once to accept the money, and so further still more the process destined to render a full half of the portions Muscovite property.

CHAPTER IV

THE MONGOLIAN INVASION AND THE MONGOLIAN YOKE

TWICE did the Mongols invade Russia. The first time they made merely a reconnaissance raid. The second time they carried out an invasion in earnest.

The first of these affairs took place in 1224. And in it twenty-five thousand horsemen, under one Djebe, participated. The result was a crushing defeat of the Russian forces at a spot between the Kalka and the Sea of Azov, and the horde's return in triumph to its native country, where at that time the famous Dchingis (or Chenghis) Khan was ruler.

Eleven years later the invasion proper took place, under Batu (or Batyi) Khan, grandson to Chenghis, when, after crossing the Urals, the Mongols fell upon the Bulgars of the Kama and razed Bolgari, the Bulgars' capital city, and then, as, instead of taking warning from this, the Russian princes still continued their mutual squabbings, advanced to what, of course, was their true objective. Only when the actual onrush of the Mongols came did the Russian princes turn and fight. Yet even then, though they fought bravely, they always did so in detachment from one another, and so rendered their defeat a foregone conclusion. The first so to succumb was the principality of Riazan. And then followed Suzdal, through a disaster at Kolomna, and the four chief towns (Vladimir, Suzdal, Rostov, and Yaroslav) of the principality were put to the flames, whilst three years later a battle on the River Sita witnessed the death of Yurii II, Suzdal's grand prince.

Novgorod herself escaped destruction by Batu only through the fortunate accident of a premature thaw. As for Kiev, the Mongols so thoroughly sacked her that later the well-known Franciscan monk Johannes de Pian del Carpine (who travelled through Russia and Tartary in 1245-8) wrote: "There there once did stand a great and populous city, but now is it so shrunken to nought as to have in it but two hundred dwellings standing, and its inhabitants held in strict servitude."

When Kiev had been captured the Mongols overran Galicia, and flung themselves upon Hungary and Poland. Germany escaped only through the timely demise of Chenghis Khan's successor, Ogadai, an event which, owing to the Mongolian regulation requiring all Mongolia's chieftains to assemble in Karakorum when a new Great Khan had to be appointed, caused Batu to face eastwards once more. Nevertheless he went no farther than the borders of the recently conquered territories, but pitched his *orda*, or golden tent, at Sarai on the Artuba, and there established an independent government, and made of his new capital a great and flourishing commercial centre. For the rest, he ruled his Russian population of the khanate on the whole well, without undue harshness. Only overt rebellion did he repress with an iron hand. Nor did he hesitate to curb his chief tax-gatherers when they showed excess of zeal. Yet, as, in spite of this, those chief tax-gatherers frequently did succeed in acting arbitrarily, and their subordinates with brutality outright, life became for the Russian population at least uncomfortable, if not absolutely past sufferance. Eventually some of the princes of Russia acquired a right of personal collection of their domain's tribute for the Horde, or even of its personal or vicarious conveyance to the Great Khan's capital, as well as certain other privileges.

The term "Tartar," or "Tatar," is a term of historical

significance only. It has no ethnographical significance, for there never was a Tartar, or Tatar, people as such. The name merely was given to a Mongolian popular unit which, in the fifth century, inhabited a portion of Manchuria and north-eastern Mongolia; whilst later it was applied to certain tribes which, Mongolian-Turkish of origin but purely Turkish of speech, had from Buddhists, or Shamanists, become Mohammedans. And though we are not altogether without reliable information as to the Mongolian, the Tartar, yoke which Russia long bore, we must remember that sandwiched in with that information there is a mass of later items which are mutually contradictory and therefore suspect. Merely can we assert with confidence that, except for the first few years of the Mongolian yoke, the latter acted upon Russia as not entirely a misfortune, as not entirely a heaper-up of ruins, since at least it strengthened the Russians' religious sense, and led them to look upon Orthodoxy as Russia's shield, and upon the Greek cross as Russia's standard, whilst also it helped to school the princes in the politico-administrative craft, and so to produce the "Great Russian ideal" which attained final substantiation under the Muscovite Tsars. For the rest, the khans interfered little with Russia's fundamental laws, family life, and ecclesiastical system. Indeed, they often placed their influence at the disposal of grand princes who seemed to be capable workers for the country's peace and prosperity, and this again helped those princes to acquire a habitude of considering themselves the country's acting heads and so to gain a model of what later became the Russian autocracy. Briefly, the khans *trained* the grand princes—made them fit eventually to become their successors. And even when Russia's princes threw off the Mongols' rule they did so, not abruptly, but through a process which gradually developed the Russian grand prince, the khans' trustee

and deputy, into the Muscovite Tsar, until finally the metamorphosis attained consummation when, in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, Russia made herself mistress of Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia. True, many a tussle took place meanwhile between Russia and Mongol, but always these conflicts represented merely protests against manner of governance by some particular khan—they were not attempts altogether to slough the yoke. And even when, in 1389, a Russian force under Dimitri of Moscow so utterly routed a khan named Mamai on the Kulikovo Plain near Tula as to leave him without an army at all, no alteration in the Russian attitude as a whole took place, but still tribute continued to be paid to the Mongolian overlord, and still Russia's territories remained, for all intents and purposes, part of the Mongolian Empire. Similarly, when Timur-i-Leno (Timur the Lame—otherwise Tamerlane), Sultan of Transoxiana and Khan of Samarkand, attacked the Golden Horde and burnt its capital of Sarai, and put Astrakhan under tribute, the Russians might easily have rid themselves of the Tartar yoke on that occasion. But they did not do so. Either they would not or they lacked the necessary *elan*.

So much, then, for the political influence exercised upon Russia by the Mongols. And as regards their administrative and financial influence, that influence at least was equal to the political. The Mongols, be it remembered, were exceptional manager-organizers. For instance, everywhere throughout their vast empire the roads had attached to them a system of posthouses and hostelries whereat halting travellers had to inscribe in registers their names, the date of their arrival, and the date of their departure, whilst those roads' purely military surveillance was such that "from Poland unto the Yellow Sea," as the saying ran, "not a dog might bay save it were permitted." Also, the Mongols' paper currency was a currency which everywhere could be

converted at a money-changer's into gold and silver, whilst likewise they issued credit notes against consignments lodged in Government warehouses, maintained grain reserves in what now would be called elevators, and permitted workers to pay their State dues in the form either of cash or of manual labour, as preferred. Nor did the Mongols keep those resources and those amenities solely to themselves. Always they tried to induce acceptance of them by the peoples whom they subdued. The extent to which Russia thus benefited is seen in our vocabulary's still-continued retention of Tartar words like *kazna* (treasury, strong-box), *dengi* (money), *altyn* (a three-copeck coin), *tamozhnia* (custom house), and *yam* (posting-stage).

Another result of the yoke was to give the country a semi-Oriental aristocracy, an aristocracy born of unions of Russian princes and grandees with khans' daughters and the rest. Naturally this aristocracy set little store by Western life and beliefs and ideas, and the fact helped the more towards developing the khanate of the Mongolian Khan into the State of the Muscovite Tsar, in that correspondingly it prevented the early population of the latter from hankering after the West's culture and manners. But though Moscow thus assimilated, eventually, the spirit and ideology of the Tartar, certain western Russian princes, the princes of, for example, Kiev, Smolensk, and Galicia, did always look to Europe—they never fully tolerated Mongolian rule, they never, as did the population of Great Russia, considered the Mongolian invader a distant relative. Between the Great Russian population in question and that invader the only real bar was the bar of religion. Not that, even so, the Mongols displayed any notable intolerance for other races' religions and beliefs. Rather, they treated those religions and beliefs with indifference. For the khans too, let it not be forgotten, were converts—they had left Buddhism, or Shamanism, for

Mohammedanism. And even if they had felt otherwise inclined—had felt moved to compel the peoples subject to them to follow their example—they would inevitably have found that, those peoples' religions being so many and various, *laissez-faire* was the better attitude. No; he whom the inhabitants of Great Russia took to be their true religious foe was the Western Christian. For many a time did that Christian avail himself of some misfortune of Russia's to raid her territory. The Hungarians and the Poles raided Galicia and Volhynia; the Germans the neighbourhood of Riga and Pskov; the Swedes Great Novgorod's domains. This, too, was why Alexander Nevski made such strenuous efforts against the Swedes on the Neva, and against the Germans at Pskov, and then straightway rendered submission to the Tartars, and declined when Pope Innocent IV begged of him to "march against the unbeliever," and in recognition of this policy was created a national hero by his countrymen, and imitated in that policy by more than one Tsar of Moscow—those Tsars variously ignoring or protesting against anti-Mongolian and anti-Turkish exhortations addressed to them by popes and Western monarchs. True, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when emperors appeared who claimed to be heirs of autocratic Byzantium, the old Byzantine idea of "Defend the Orthodox faith, and all Orthodox peoples, from the infidel!" was more than once taken as a pretext for Russian action against Turkey; but also Russia, at that period, waged wars certainly not so motivated, but inspired by a desire firstly to acquire more territory for herself, and secondly to use Orthodoxy as a cloak for harrying other peoples, whether Catholic or Protestant.

CHAPTER V

NOVGOROD THE GREAT AND HER REPUBLICS

WE find Jornandes writing of Novgorod as great and prosperous as early as the sixth century. She was so because of, for one reason, her geographical isolation, which kept her largely clear of Russian politics in general, and of the appanage princes' warrings in particular. Moreover, she concerned the appanage princes the less through the fact that they found the splendour and importance of Kiev a more dazzling attraction. Novgorod was for them merely a place in which to reside temporarily. Through her geographical isolation, also, Novgorod preserved pure and unchanged the Slavs' cherished socio-political principles longer than did the rest of the country.

Yet Novgorod often had to stand on the defensive, if not against native foes, at all events against alien: and this caused her to need always to have at her disposal a military commander who could keep those foes outside. So more than once in her early days Novgorod requested some southern prince to come and serve her thus, and, later, the same as regards certain eastern princes. At the same time, the princes' position on the Novgorodians' governing body was scarcely enviable. They possessed little real authority there during their engagement, and could not locally own immovable property, and might not nominate local functionaries without the permission of the *Posadnik*, or chief magistrate, and stood debarred from making laws, signing treaties, taking any part in commerce, or administering justice independently of the *Posadnik*. True, Novgorod

always did manage to secure princes, but they went to her less for her own sake than because their ever-increasing number for ever tended to render them portionless otherwise. Novgorod's princes, in fact, were *kormlentschiks*, or, to translate the word literally, "nurselings"—rulers kept in leading-strings, rulers forced to leave the real authority of the place in the hands of the people's *Vietché*.

Decisions in the *Vietché* had to be arrived at unanimously. If a minority disagreed with anything it usually found that the best course was flight. Which proves the Novgorodians' political methods strongly to have resembled those which Thietmar, Bishop of Merseburg during the eleventh century, observed amongst the Baltic Slavs. Says Thietmar in his *Chronikon*:

Nowhere have those Slavs one chief authority alone. All their affairs do they order in common, and in assemblies of the people which perforce must decide everything with undivided voice. If such an assembly be found to have in it persons not consenting unto the thinking of the most part, then are those persons beaten with clubs. Yea, and if the offence be repeated, they do have their houses burnt for them, and are put to all sorts of misery, and mulcted in forfeits according as are their means. Yet these same Slavs are unstable, and full of guile. Of their fellows always they demand constancy and faithfulness, but they themselves are such that for money always they will break a truce.

But in time the Novgorodians' assembly became, for all intents and purposes, a junta, and the prince's power increased slightly, and the influence of the commercial plutocracy did so very much. Commerce, in fact, constituted the pivot of Novgorod's existence, as was but natural, seeing that the city stood within no great distance of the Baltic, and had at her doors a navigable river leading to the south, and possessed an ethnographical composition especially suitable for mercantile

activity. Only when Novgorod began to colonize northward and eastward did rural industry become joined to urban as a factor of importance in Novgorodian life.

The Novgorodians first traded with Scandinavia. They did so on a basis of barter—the Scandinavians bringing with them cloths, wines, spices, wheat, and silver, and taking back with them furs, gems, and Oriental and Byzantine textiles. Then Visby arose, and became the capital of Gottland, and added her merchants to the Scandinavian, and the former established factories in Novgorod until Novgorodian trade, ceasing merely to be barter trade, became sufficiently important to warrant German merchants in making the city their permanent place of residence, and increasing their numbers there until they constituted more than half the local foreign-mercantile population, and could nominate a second *Posadnik*, and introduce their monetary system, and a mint of their own in supplementation of the already established English and Hungarian currencies.

Novgorod's foreign trade passed largely into foreign hands for the reason that Russia's native merchants still lacked shipping, still could not "show the flag" overseas. Indeed, when the fourteenth century opened, Novgorod's factorial industry was controlled wholly by Lubeck and the Hanseatic League. But in time the foreign industrialists began to trend away from her again, for hitherto they had enjoyed exclusive privileges within her walls, and now Moscow was rising, and vexatious fiscal restrictions of her imposing were to be feared. Thus Novgorod's commerce wavered—declined—died, finally, of inanition and inactivity: whilst in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries other causes, causes more complex, led to her territorial possessions undergoing dislocation and dissolution.

In the eleventh century, however, and during the early portion of the twelfth, the Novgorodians showed

themselves vigorous pioneers and colonists who travelled far and wide to seek virgin land and scope for exploitation: they journeyed eastward of Lake Ladoga to the Sukhona and the northern Dvina and reached, within a century, the White Sea. In these regions the indigenous inhabitants were tribes sprung of Finnish stock, and the regions themselves so abounded in game, fur, fish, timber, and peat as to enable the Novgorodians extensively to establish riverside and lakeside factories which gradually developed into townships, and acquired churches and monasteries. Also, the settlers from the northern city cleared plots for rye and flax, netted the waters for fish, and set traps for marten, sable, and silver fox. Until, finally, encouraged by this success, other Novgorodians set forth across the marshy plain of the Neva, and thence trended northward and eastward until they reached the coast of what then was known as "Nordmanland," and now is called Murmansk, whilst others again made for the Middle Urals, and discovered there a great decayed city which, once the capital of a Finnish kingdom of Great Perm, and an important exchange centre for furs and Indian and Persian goods and (probably) Uralian gold and gems, still showed signs of its former prosperity in its temples' and idols' lavish adornment with gilding, and in the richness of its headmen's weapons and attire. The Novgorodian settlers' discovery of the place, however, brought thither also Novgorodian soldiery, and this spelt the *coup-de-grâce* to a decline long aggravated by attacks from the Ziranian people.¹ Great Perm's last-remaining inhabitants then migrated northward and to Finland, where, interbreeding with the Finns of that locality, they gave rise to the studious, hard-working Karelian stock. Lastly, a second Novgorodian east-

¹ A tribe still numbering some 170,000. Frequently they are known as "the Jews of the North," so remarkable is their aptitude for trade.

ward thrust came of Novgorodian internal dissensions of the sort which constituted a permanent feature of the city's life. The occasion of the movement's initiation was one of the usual differences in *Vietché*, when, on a large minority of citizens disagreeing with their fellows, the dissentients sought safety, as was customary, in flight, and, proceeding in scattered bands to the Upper Volga, and thence to the Kama, and thence (since they feared trouble with the Bulgars if they should remain long where they were) to the Viatka, founded a republic whose subsequent history, though mainly a record of the doings of thieves and cut-throats, is also a record of exploits by thieves sufficiently astute, and by cut-throats sufficiently bold, to force Moscow's grand princes often to resort to repressive efforts, and finally, in 1489, to send sixty thousand warriors for the Viatkan Republic's permanent subjection.

Pskov, fifty *versts* from the westward frontier of Russia, also was an outpost planted by Novgorod. But in time Pskov complained that the mother city too often made it her policy to raid Livonia, and then leave Pskov to bear the full brunt of the resultant reprisals: until in the thirteenth century, weary thus of acting as shield and scapegoat, Pskov set up a prince-governor on her own account, and hesitated the less to do so in that Novgorod consistently had omitted to ask her to join in, through deputies, the mother city's sessions of *Vietché*. Pskov's geographical position (the town occupied a triangular piece of land between two rivers and a lake) rendered her easily capable of defence, and therefore her first-selected prince, Dovmond of Lithuania, soon became popular, and remained so throughout his term of thirty-three years. Both he and his successor (a Lithuanian like himself) exercised rule as, primarily, commanders of the local militia, and only secondarily as juridical-legislative heads. This last department was left to the local *Vietché*, which carried

on its debates without the uproar and bitterness peculiar to Novgorod, and in 1467 effected a more precise definition of the prince's and its own rights and duties with a *sudnaia gramota* (charter of laws) which, in addition, specified the prerogatives and functions of the *Posadnik*, of the prince's retinue, and of the rest of the city's functionaries, and, finally, had appended to it a code of civil and criminal statutes, and regulations for protecting property and heirs to property.

But though Pskov and one or two other free towns long stood proof against attacks upon their independence, that independence in each case fell at last before the ever-growing authority of Moscow, whose princes gradually came to have at their disposal commanding forces both of persuasion and of duress. Also, there was the factor that the political and economic life of Moscow began to seem to the free towns' citizens more attractive than did their own home liberties, seeing that these steadily were becoming less and less according as the local plutocracies more and more dominated the local *Vietchés*. And Moscow's grand princes, knowing this, and that they could rely upon it, issued at last to Novgorod and Pskov the ultimatum: "Do ye now suppress your *Vietchia*,¹ and take down the bells hitherto summoning the people unto the same."

According as these two cities lost importance, the grand princes of Moscow transferred batches of their populations to Muscovy, and sent to replace those batches Central Russian families. But though this was a shrewd enough political step, it had the effect of practically putting an end to Novgorodian and Pskovian civic life. No wonder that we find a Pskovian chronicler lamenting:

Behold how an eagle with many wings and a lion's claws is fallen upon us, and hath ravished from us our three Cedars of Lebanon—our beauty, our wealth, and our sons,

¹ The plural of *Vietché*.

and left the land desolate, and her town in ruins, and her market places empty, and removed our brethren whither never our fathers, nor yet our grandfathers and great-grandfathers, did dwell!

But though the bulk of Novgorod's expansion was northward and eastward, she spread also westward. At the same time, there was this difference between the two movements: that whereas the former movement was one of Novgorodian citizens bent upon colonization, the latter was a movement of Novgorodian priests bent upon conversion of the Baltic Slavs and the inhabitants of Esthonia and Livonia. From the first the latter movement met with resistance, and especially from the German Order of Swordbearing Knights which had become established in Livonia after that region's cession to Germany by Vladimir of Polotsk. For the knights also desired to proselytize the Baltic populations. And at their back they had Rome and a special Papal legate, Guillaume of Savoy and Modena. In the result Novgorod had long and bitterly to contend with the German warriors, and also, in proportion as she penetrated Finland, with Sweden. But at last she found a saviour and liberator in the person of Alexander Yaroslavevitch. Alexander beat, in turn, both the Swedes and the Swordbearing Knights. And thenceforth Novgorod drew her breath freely until the day of her final subjugation by Moscow arrived.

Alexander was a great-grandson of Vladimir Monomakh. Essentially a Novgorodian prince, he succeeded his father there in 1236, and would in all probability have been compelled by the local outbreaks of dissension to do as his father had done, and periodically leave the city to itself, had not, just at the moment of his entry upon rule, the Swedes launched against the republic a more than ordinarily vigorous offensive. The manner of the prince's learning that in the July of 1240 the Swedes had landed upon the Neva was as

follows. For some time past Novgorod had been maintaining an observation post in the delta of the river named, and early on the morning of the 10th of the month, just as the sun was rising, the post's Finnish commander, a Christian convert and active, loyal soldier named Philip Pelgusius, heard some strange sounds to seaward, and then saw riding in the offing a barque, and standing on the deck of the barque with outstretched arms the saint-martyrs Boris and Gleb.¹ The rowers of the barque were all in shadow. Only the two brothers, in purple-gleaming vestments, had their faces and forms thrown into relief by the rising sun. Suddenly Boris cried to Gleb: "Gleb, do thou now bid the rowers further us with more speed, in that there must be no tarrying until we shall have warned our kinsman Alexander of the peril of the Swedes, for his aiding." Then the vision disappeared. For a few moments the worthy Pelgusius felt stricken with awe, but, speedily recovering, he decided to start for Novgorod, and relate what he had seen and heard. The distance of two hundred *verss* ² he covered without a halt. And, on arriving at Novgorod, he rushed into the prince's presence and, scarcely able to breathe, told his story. Said Alexander in response: "Thou hast done well indeed! I am much pleased with thee. But tell nought of this to any man else." Then the prince had the tocsin sounded for his warriors' mustering, and hastened to the Neva. There he found the Swedes to be already established at the river's point of junction with the Ijora, and so little expecting an attack as to have drawn their vessels up to dry, and pitched tents, and put out no sentinels. Falling forthwith upon the invaders, and slaying their leader with his own hand, Alexander earned the name by which ever after-

¹ See p. 22. In Russia these usually are venerated as one—as Saint Boris-Gleb.

² 130 miles.

wards he was known, the name of Alexander Nevski, or "Alexander of the Neva."

Yet it was not long before the Novgorodians proved so forgetful and ungrateful as to quarrel with their champion, and force him to withdraw to Periaslavl. Meanwhile the Swordbearing Knights of Germany, deeming themselves to be mightier men than the Swedes and able to do better than they, attacked Pskov. For leader they had a Russian prince who had adopted Catholicism, Yaroslav Vladimirovitch, and after occupying the city they left there a German garrison, and spread their main body over the countryside—looting and burning right and left, and slaying chance travellers who were bound for Novgorod. Only then, only when some of the invading bands approached Novgorod herself, did Novgorod's citizens realize the mistake which they had made in expelling Alexander. Hastily they sent the city's bishop, Spiridon, to beg that he would return to them, and Alexander, showing no resentment (perhaps the less so because he knew that at that moment when Russian territories fast were falling under the Tartar yoke a German capture of Novgorod would amount to no less than a national catastrophe), returned as requested, and once more placed his sword at his petitioners' disposal. As a first step he cleared the neighbourhood of the bands of German pillagers, and, as a second, he expelled the German garrison from Pskov. Then he sat down to await the main body's return thither, as, according to reports, it was approaching the vicinity again. Sure enough he soon received word of its impending arrival. At once going out to meet it—which he did at sunrise on 5 April, 1242—he prayed with uplifted hands: "O Lord, do Thou now judge my cause against these violent men!" and then, on the frozen but constantly cracking surface of Lake Pskov, inflicted upon the Germans such carnage that at last they broke and fled.

Next day he entered Pskov in state, with his more notable prisoners walking on either side of his charger, and the populace cheering tumultuously. The chief result of his German and Swedish victories was to inspire Russia's western neighbours with a feeling that further attempts at annexation of Novgorodian and Pskovian territory were best relinquished. Indeed, moves for reconciliation outright were made, with a specially active move of the sort emanating from Pope Innocent IV, ever an advocate of a united anti-infidel Christian front in general, and of an anti-Mongol Christian front in particular. Alexander, however, declined the proposal. He felt that he should prefer even submission to the Tartar to fraternization with the Germans and Swedes who had just been his antagonists, and the more so as he deemed such fraternization to promise danger rather than security. In 1246, therefore, he initiated negotiations with the Horde, and, proceeding to Sarai with his younger brother Andrew, begged the khan to appoint him to his late father's titular position as Grand Prince of Vladimir and Suzdal. The khan received the brothers civilly, but, as regards the appointment desired, merely referred Alexander to the emperor, the Great Khan himself, and therefore the visitors had to proceed onward to Karakorum—to traverse the long route subsequently trodden by noted travellers like the brothers Polo,¹ Friar Rubruquis,² and Johannes de Pian del Carpine. Indeed, it was nearly a year before the brothers reached the Mongolian capital.

Karakorum in those days was rich, populous, and embellished with monuments (public baths and so forth) presented to the city as memorials of their reigns by various Great Khans. Also it contained a huge *fondouk*, or caravanserai, and a splendid palace, whilst the

¹ Marco Polo's father and uncle.

² A French ecclesiastic who, during the years 1252-5, toured the East in the service of Louis IX.

population was so cosmopolitan that amongst the city's Kiptchaks, Manchus, Chinese, Armenians, Jews, Finns, and others Rubruquis encountered two countrymen of his own, former (like the bulk of the city's European element) prisoners of war. With one of these compatriots, a certain Guillaume Boucher who had been a jeweller of Paris and then become a former Great Khan's (Mangu's) own goldsmith, he dined, he adds, on the Palm Sunday of 1247.

Alexander and his brother received the same hospitable welcome in Karakorum as in Sarai, for the present Great Khan, Ogadai, had heard much of Alexander's wisdom and valour. Yet at the same time he did not wholly trust him. Hence, eventually, he awarded the petitioned-for throne of Suzdal, not to Alexander, but to Andrew, and for the time being the elder brother had to rest content with Novgorod and Kiev. Time, however, worked on Alexander's side. Andrew soon found that he could not get on with his Mongolian masters, and in 1252 had to leave Suzdal, and go first to Novgorod, and then to Sweden. And as at the same time Alexander happened conveniently to be in Sarai, and had a gift for always turning circumstances to account, the acting khan in Sarai (a son of Batu) did then accord him the titular dignity of Grand Prince of Vladimir and Suzdal.

Thenceforth he devoted his efforts to making peace between Russian and Mongol, to obtaining for his brother Andrew a pardon from the Great Khan, and, in 1257, to intervening between Novgorod and the Horde when the former opposed Tartar emissaries sent for a first assessment to tribute. Novgorod on that occasion protested that she lay outside the area of the Mongols' conquests, and it was only with great difficulty that Alexander induced compliance—he had first to conjure up the spectre of a possible attack upon Novgorod by a Mongolian army. Even more difficult

did he find it to deal with an anti-Mongolian movement of 1262 which arose, as the just-mentioned trouble had done, from the Mongolian treasury's demands. Alexander again had to hasten to Sarai, again had to intercede. Then, after successfully inducing the khan both to forgive the rebels and to absolve Russia's principalities from having any longer to furnish armed contingents to the Horde, he caught a chill during the return journey home, and died immediately on reaching Vladimir. "My children," cried the Metropolitan Cyril to his flock on the broaching of the sad news, "the sun is set for ever upon this our Russian land!" and the people fervently responded: "We will die with him!" Later Peter the Great had the remains of Alexander translated to St. Petersburg. And later again the Empress Elizabeth had them placed in a silver sarcophagus and deposited in Alexander's monastery, the monastery of Alexander Nevski.

Princes, when he was gone, succeeded one another rapidly in the Novgorodian sequence—the citizens tiring of their rulers as readily as their rulers tired of them. But at last Moscow's still-continuing rise, and still-continued resolve to make possession of the free city her own, forced the latter to resort once more to external aid. This time she obtained it from the vigorous young Lithuanian principality. But no sooner had she done so than Lithuania proposed installation of a permanent Lithuanian representative, and Novgorod protested against this, and determined to revert to governance of herself. Then one day when sundry Novgorodians had, as usual, repaired to Moscow for adjudication upon differences between themselves and their Government, two purely private citizens among the number chanced to be mistaken by Moscow for envoys of official status, for the reason that when those citizens entered Ivan III's presence a *lapsus linguæ* led them to hail him as "Gosudar" ("Sovereign") instead of as "Gospodin"

(merely "Sir" or "Lord"). And though, in response to Ivan's inquiry of Novgorod whether her citizens really desired him to become their "Gosudar," the Novgorodians replied with heat that that was anything but the case, and that the "envoys" had not been envoys, but private persons, and then emphasized the disclaimer by killing some citizens who stood suspect of advocating a Novgorodian-Muscovite *rapprochement*, Ivan decided, even so, to find some pretext for abolishing Novgorod's liberties, and discovered it, ostensibly in "Novgorod's arrogant and hurtful reply." So, mustering an army, he set forth, and this time the insistent gesture so far overawed the Novgorodians as to lead them to beg of him, through a deputation headed by the local bishop, that he would, in return for a substantial ransom, at least leave them personally unmolested. Then Ivan propounded his terms. Those terms were abolition of Novgorod's *Vietché*, removal of the bell hitherto summoning the people thither, and annulment of the office of *Posadnik*, whilst in return he would let Novgorod's citizens retain their hitherto laws and municipal system, and her *boyars* their rights of property. So far as the terms in themselves were concerned, the Novgorodians accepted them. But also they requested their "swearing upon the cross," and this so angered Ivan that formally he initiated a siege, decimated the place's population with famine and disease, and, finally, forced a surrender. Then, leaving the city and her territories unsacked after all, he returned to Moscow. Yet scarcely had he reached his capital when he received word that already the Novgorodians had embarked upon fresh negotiations with Prince Casimir of Lithuania, and were plotting to massacre Ivan's Novgorodian force of occupation: wherefore in the spring of 1480 he mustered another army, marched back again, and when, as before, Novgorod sought first to parley, replied that previous to

any such parley the city's gates must be opened. This was done, and Ivan, entering, embarked upon reprisals—sent the local bishop to Moscow and had him interned in the Chudovoi Monastery, and put a hundred and fifty of the richest local merchants to death and sequestered their property, and deported eight thousand local families to the centre of the country and, after destroying their household goods, assigned their dwellings to Muscovites.

Thus the practical ending of "Gospodin Velikii Novgorod," of "Our Lord Novgorod the Great." Thenceforth Novgorod remained but a wretched, lifeless local capital.

CHAPTER VI

THE EMPIRE OF MOSCOW

THE Empire of Moscow began merely as a prince's summer residence. In 1147 the Kievan Grand Prince Yurii Dolgoruki wrote to his friend, the northern Prince Sviatoslav Olgovitch: "Brother, come and visit me at Moskva." And ten years later, when Yurii died, his son Andrew Bogoliubski, the prince who had deserted Vychgorod for Vladimir, converted Moskva into a western outpost of his grand principality of Suzdal, and equipped it with a blockhouse, a wall of stone, and a garrison which at last grew into the population of the Muscovite Empire.

Moscow's origin as an appanage, therefore, differed from the origin of her fellows. It differed, too, in that Moscow never at any time enjoyed the free institutions which at one time and another were so marked a feature in the Russias of Kiev and Novgorod. In Moscow even the council of *boyars* always was subject to the prince, and was paid for its services to him with *pomiestia* (military estates) as in the Byzantine and Tartar States. Yet Moscow's *boyars* came to her from every quarter of the Russian land, for the reason that her prosperity kept growing, and it was worth while to have a share in it. At the same time, it was only later that those *boyars* obtained a real root in the soil, and became an aristocracy capable of standing up to the prince: this occurred only when the *Tsarstvo* had come into being. As yet the power of Moscow's *boyars* was ephemeral merely. Then, when the class's long struggle with, and decimation by, Ivan IV came to an end, the class did acquire a temporary

measure of independence, and retain it through the period of troubles: but no sooner were the Romanovs installed upon the throne than gradually the *boyar* council lost its legal prerogatives again, and found itself left with rights based solely upon custom and the sovereign's will. Meanwhile the common people was composed mostly of *kholops*, of slaves, of bondsmen whom their masters had redeemed from the Tartars, and regarded as their property outright. True, a few free peasantry also existed, but their condition little excelled that of the *kholops* and, even so, Moscow constantly kept enacting legislation tending to enserf them equally with the latter. The inevitable result of all this was to lead the grand princes of Moscow, and, after, them the Tsars of that State, to look upon the State in question as so much territory of whose soil and population they were the absolute owners. This was succinctly voiced by Ivan IV when he said: "It lieth solely within Our sovereign will whether We do favour Our subjects, or whether We do chastise them."

The same process of State-construction for service merely as a private *votchina* (patrimony) led Moscow's early rulers to reck little of their subjects' rights, property, and even lives. And though it may likewise be said that those "sobirатели земли московской" ("first assemblers¹ of the Muscovite Land") showed a measure of sagacity and fixed purpose in what they did, circumstances were what helped them most. One circumstance of the sort was Moscow's geographical position, for she stood where routes from the Baltic met routes to the Volga and the Kama, and where routes from the Don met routes to the Upper Dnieper and the north. And a later favouring circumstance was that when the Golden Horde conquered the country that Horde found it to its advantage to help on the country's unification and consolidation, and to appoint the Muscovite grand

¹ That is to say, putters together, consolidators, or collectors.

princes the Horde's chief collectors of tribute, and so to train those princes to look upon themselves as, under the Horde, the country's principal authority, whilst receiving constantly the reminder that the connection with the Horde was too close easily to be broken. Moscow's first real source of unity and power, then, was that Horde's yoke. And when the yoke fell from her it did so principally through its own internal decay and dissolution—it fell through, in part, internal dissension, and, in part, Moscow's ability to await the event.

Yet attribution solely to the Mongolian yoke of the Muscovite Empire's ultimate consolidation and independence would be a mistake. Another factor besides the geographical and ethnographical factors mentioned was Byzantium's influence. From Byzantium Moscow derived, for example, the *knut*,¹ the *terem*,² and *chelobitie*.³ But it was not from Byzantium that she derived her crown. The crown of Russia is not a Byzantine *vienetz*, but merely a Tartar cap, or *shapka*, which a khan once presented to a grand duke of Moscow.⁴ Nor need we assume too readily that the title of Tsar (Cæsar) hailed from the Bosphorus. Just as likely it hailed from the Lower Volga. True, Moscow used strongly to hold to the idea that her sovereigns stood in the direct line of succession to Byzantium's emperors, but she did so only when the Turk had finally laid Byzantium low. Otherwise, in styling themselves Tsars, the grand princes of Moscow probably had in mind no more than an adorning of themselves with a title equivalent to—just that and no more—the term khan. Thus Muscovy (and, later, Russia) owed the bulk of her development to the influence of Byzantium

¹ Scourge, whip.

² Separate apartments for womenfolk.

³ The ceremony of beating the forehead against the ground before a ruler.

⁴ Probably Ivan II, as will be shown later.

and Tartary. And, for the rest, we may say that the actual period of Moscow's foundation as a State was the thirteenth century, since it was then that, when dividing Suzdal amongst his heirs, Vsevolod III awarded the old summer retreat of Yurii Dolgoruki to Yurii II. Thence Moskva descended to Alexander Nevski, and, under him, grew into an important settlement. And he, again, in his old age bequeathed it (1263) to his son Daniel. And when Daniel had held it until the year 1303 (meanwhile adding to it the important appanage of Periaslavl-Zalieski, on the death of that appanage's proprietor, his nephew Ivan), he, Daniel, yielded it to his son Yurii, who reigned from 1303 to 1325, and meanwhile reinforced himself with the appanage of Kolomna, and then challenged Michael, Prince of Tver, as to which of the two thenceforth should be known as Grand Prince of All Russia. Since the Mongolian invasion, be it explained, the rules of succession with regard to this title had fallen rather into disuse, and become for the most part dependent upon the khan commanding the Golden Horde, who, caring little for Russia's ancient custom of making the title always go with tenure of some particular town, had converted the title purely into a personal one. Hence, on Yurii now entering the lists with Michael of Tver, he had to do so with the khan acting as arbitrator, and to use in that quarter *donos*,¹ bribery, and intrigue. The upshot was that, though he did succeed in ousting Michael, and in having him summoned to Sarai and his throat cut, he, Yurii, was soon afterwards killed in battle by Michael's son, Alexander, and the struggle's continuance left to the brother of Yurii who afterwards became Ivan Kalita of Moscow. From this continuance, again, Ivan issued the victor, but only to be disappointed, only to find that Alexander, his late opponent, received the coveted title instead of

¹ A laying of information.

himself. Then a curious circumstance led to Tver itself, Alexander's own city, aiding Ivan against Alexander. This was because, unprompted by Ivan, the city rose against the khan, and by slaying the khan's local representative, gave Ivan the idea of repairing to the Horde, and offering himself to suppress the Tveran rebellion if, in return, the titular grand principship should become his. The Horde agreed to this, and thereupon Ivan led fifty thousand men to Tver, sacked and fired the town, and duly received his reward. Yet even then he could not stay his implacable enmity against Tver. True, Alexander had surrendered and was fled to Pskov, but Ivan incited the Metropolitan Theognostes to threaten the Pskovians with excommunication if they continued to give Alexander harbourage. And when in 1339 Alexander, after removing to Lithuania, returned to Pskov, Ivan persuaded the khan to command him to Sarai—where his assassination was duly contrived.

Thus Ivan was as pitiless to a foe as subservient to a master. And such was his avarice as to earn for him the additional name of "Kalita," which in Polish is *Kaletar* and in Arabic *Kherita*, and means sack or purse. Hence legend is wrong in asserting the name to have come of a charitable tendency. It came of Ivan's greed alone. In fact, he spent his whole life in acquiring riches. Already we have seen what he did with regard to purchasing decayed appanages: and in addition he seized appanages by force, as when in an appalling manner he and his Russo-Tartar army sacked the appanage of Smolensk. Always, too, he took care to keep on the right side of the Great Khan. And at last, in consequence, the Great Khan made him collector-general of tribute. Nevertheless both Muscovy and the principality of Vladimir owed much peace and prosperity to his governance, so that their populations and commerce increased apace. As regards the town just named, it remained the two principalities' nominal capital, but

Moscow was Ivan's actual seat, and so became the country's main political centre, and attracted *boyars* to it in ever-growing numbers, whilst as the place of the metropolitan's *cathedra* it ranked also as Muscovy's headquarters in the religious aspect.

To Ivan Kalita, in 1341, succeeded his eldest son, Simeon Gordii, or Simeon the Proud. And Simeon continued his father's policy, for he was just as supple, just as unscrupulous, just as merciless, and just as careful to cultivate the khan. In 1353, again, he was succeeded by his brother Ivan, who as Ivan II, or Ivan the Handsome, practically threw away all that Simeon had achieved, owing to his habit of letting neighbouring princes regain their appanage autonomy, and to the fact that he lost the title of Grand Prince of All Russia to Suzdal. However, in 1369, when he died, and his ten-year-old son, Dimitri, became the ruler of Muscovy, fortune returned to Moscow once more, for the council of *boyars*, a body whose interests were bound up closely with those of the dynasty, became a Council of Regency as well, and recovered the grand princely title for Moscow, and even induced the khan to recognize young Dimitri as Tsar in that capacity.

Dimitri's policy, when his minority was over, leads chronicles to contradict one another. Nothing certain do we know about it save that it was at least bolder, more adventurous, than his father's had been. First he overcame his neighbour of Suzdal. Then, through trying to extend his authority over Tver and Riazan, he aroused in them the instinct of self-defence, and those two principalities sought allies, and eventually Dimitri found himself confronted both by Olgerd of Lithuania and the Khan of the Horde. Only after a struggle with, and a defeat of, Lithuania did Dimitri force Michael of Tver to acknowledge Muscovite supremacy. Next, encouraged by these successes and by exhortations from Abbot Sergius of the Troitski Monastery and

other ecclesiastics, Dimitri challenged the Khan of the Golden Horde himself and began operations in that connection with an attack upon Kazan. Fortunately for Dimitri, the Horde's strength had waned through internal revolutions and rivalries—the process had begun in Khan Uzbek's day—and Khan Mamai, successor to Timur-Melek, had at his disposal a mere semblance of an army only, whilst, even so, all his best warriors were away fighting on the borders of China. Not otherwise, probably, would Dimitri have succeeded even in levying tribute upon two minor Tartar princes of the Kazan region and, in 1378, crushing a force of Mongols at Riazan. Then Mamai, having mustered all available details and made a suitable agreement with Jagiello of Poland (who was eager to exact vengeance for the defeat which had been inflicted upon Prince Olgerd), set out for Moscow. As soon as he drew near the city Sergius of Troitski's words to Dimitri were: "Now, God protect and shield thee; may He overthrow thine enemies, and grant thee even more glory!" And Dimitri's words to his troops were: "Brethren, let us not spare our lives in defence of the Church and the Christian faith." Hence the contest now entered upon constituted virtually an anti-infidel crusade. The two armies met on the Plain of Kulikovo, near the sources of the Don, on 8 September, 1380. And as the Russians wished before all things to prevent a junction between Mamai and Jagiello, they delivered their attack even before all their forces had reached the field. Dimitri's side began by losing fifteen princes, and letting the scales seem to favour the Mongols: but then Dimitri let loose some cavalry which he had kept concealed in a coppice, and so broke irreparably the Mongolian ranks. Yet the victory was only a Pyrrhic one, for still the Horde was too strong to be overthrown by a single reverse. Hastily Tamerlane sent a subordinate of his named Toktamish to reorganize the Mongolian

army, and then, himself coming with a force from central Asia, postponed Russia's emancipation from the yoke for another century by falling upon Moscow with fire and sword. The result was such that Dimitri (now become Dimitri Donskoi, "Dimitri of the Don") cried in despair: "Our fathers never did triumph over the Tartars as did we. Yet never were their misfortunes like unto ours!"

The reign was indifferently successful for the reason that the Russians did not (either would not or could not) push home the victories of 1378 and 1380, and use them towards finally throwing off the Mongolian incubus. And the same as regards a quarrel which arose between Toktamish and Tamerlane in 1381. Always Dimitri let vanity and ambition give the yoke a further lease. The same factor, too, made Tver and Riazan seek foreign alliances. The net result was fresh suffering for Dimitri's subjects. But as out of evil there almost always comes good, Dimitri's indulgence in heroically imprudent adventures at least was not imitated by his successors.

To Dimitri succeeded, in 1389, his son Vasilii. And, as Vasilii I, this son reigned until 1425, and, during the reign, annexed Murom, Suzdal, and Nizhni Novgorod, got hold of the whole of the Volgan trade, regained ascendancy over Novgorod the Great, and compelled Pskov to receive Muscovite-appointed *Posadniks*.

Next followed Vasilii II (1425-62). This ruler knew, as his father had done, how to tack, and when to temporize, and when to cease doing so, with his eye always upon an ultimate Muscovite hegemony. Best known in our annals as Vasilii Temnii, or Vasilii the Blind (for a nephew whose brother he had once tortured had put out one of his eyes), he, during his reign's first twenty-five years, saw much bloodshed and turmoil take place, through the fact that all the while he had to defend the title of Grand Prince of All Russia against an uncle of his, Prince Yurii of Galicia, who at least had as a basis

for his claim the rules of seniority hallowed by tradition. But eventually Vasili's gold, and the obeisances which Vasili's *boyars* made to the khan, won the day, and the khan put aside the juridical subtleties proffered by the uncle. So much for the present. Later, success reverted to the uncle, and he not only wrested the title from Vasili, but retained it until his death. And even then Vasili recovered it only through the method of having all the uncle's sons slain. Just after finishing this long struggle he was kidnapped by some Tartars near Kazan, and had to pay a huge ransom for his release. Then, undeterred by the *contretemps*, he annexed some more appanages, made the weight of his arm felt by Tver, Riazan, and Novgorod, and though refraining from an attack upon the Horde in the open field, set about undermining its power with a policy of welcoming Tartar refugees to Russia, and giving them estates there, to the end that they should become potential allies against their former master.

This would conclude the record of Vasili II were it not that there remains an event of his reign which particularly well illustrates Moscow's then religious attitude. The event in question was a first appointment by Byzantium of a *Greek* Kievan and All-Russian Metropolitan. Russia received her first evangelization from Greek missionaries. And ever since that time (the tenth century) she had been ecclesiastically subject to the Patriarch of Constantinople, and imbibed her spiritual ideas from Constantinople, and maintained close ties with the hierarchy of that city. At the same time, Byzantium's solicitude for Russia from the political standpoint had been otherwise—it had been a solicitude varying according to circumstances. We see this from the fact that when the Mongols invaded the country and levied tribute, Byzantium sent not a single soldier and not a single coin for Russia's assistance. In 1431, however, the death of the Metropolitan Photius of Kiev

left the Kievan *cathedra* vacant, and thereupon Byzantium thought that now was the moment definitely to get a finger into Russia's pie in the political as well as in the ecclesiastical sphere. At the same time the choice of a new occupant of Russia's premier see presented grave difficulties. For one thing Kiev, the cradle of the Russian faith, was then much subject to Lithuanian influence; and when Moscow nominated Jonas, Bishop of Riazan, to the post the local Lithuanian party boldly put forward one Gerasimus as a candidate of their own. And owing to the fact that Jonas dallied about procuring approval of his candidature from Byzantium, Gerasimus was able to forestall him in having his candidature not only approved by Byzantium, but definitely confirmed: whilst when Gerasimus died in 1435 and Jonas made a second presentation of his candidature to Constantinople, it was to find that now the emperor and the Patriarch had fixedly made up their minds that the man needed at the Muscovite Court was a man wholly devoted to, and able to further, their pet scheme of a reunion between the Greek and the Latin Churches. So instead of Jonas, Isidore, Prior of the Cloister of Saint Demetrius in Constantinople, was appointed Metropolitan of Kiev, and Jonas had to rest content with a promise that he should be the next metropolitan—provided that he lived long enough.

When Isidore reached the banks of the Moskva from the shores of the Bosphorus he found himself landed in a world of which he and his compatriots still stood largely in ignorance. Only his immediate task was well known to him. That task was to bring it about that Russia should send an official delegate to the Church Council about to be held at Florence and Ferrara—should authorize him himself to proceed thither as her accredited representative. And he meant at all costs to fulfil that task. Not that the then politico-religious condition of Moscow favoured such an enter-

prise. The reigning prince himself stood opposed to it, and the more so as, of course, Isidore's appointment had gravely shaken his, the prince's, and his Government's prestige. Until now the ecclesiastical dignitaries attached to Moscow had always shown themselves subservient functionaries. Now this Isidore promised to prove quite the opposite. However, he had come surrounded with a touch of the Byzantine halo, and therefore Vasilii received him politely, and accorded him the usual official banquet and gifts. So much for that. The atmosphere of amity then halted, and the prince found it impossible any longer to conceal his distaste for Isidore's designs, for the idea of Greek ecclesiastics conferring with Latin ecclesiastics about reunion. All that sort of thing was utterly opposed to Vasilii's notions. Greek teachers themselves had imbued him with the tenet that only the first seven Œcumenical Councils ought to be regarded, and that the eighth¹—which, through the mouth of Pope Nicholas I, had branded the Patriarch Photius as a heretic—had, with its successors, no valid title to any sort of respect. And now here was this Byzantine-appointed Greek metropolitan calmly proposing to salve over the old sore, and impose acceptance of a strange innovation! Vasilii said to him: "My father, dost thou not know that the Seventh Council of the Church did once, and for all time, expound the true doctrine of the Apostles, and with that declare anathema against all who thereafter should heed such Councils?" However, Isidore had given his pledged word to the Patriarch, and perforce had to remain obdurate. So eventually Vasilii did authorize him to represent Russia at the forthcoming Council, and dispatch him thither. Merely, in a last attempt to salve his scruples, did he say: "Thou now art going unto a Council which all our holy traditions do denounce. Then see to it that at least, when thou

¹ Held in Constantinople in the year 869.

returnest thence, thou returnest holding unchanged the faith cherished of Vladimir himself. For we should mislike indeed aught new therein." Isidore gave an oath upon the point. But that oath was purely perfunctory. Isidore's whole business at the Council was to join with Greek and Latin ecclesiastics in determining whether the Byzantine Church, or whether the Church of Rome, most had preserved Vladimir's faith absolutely pure and intact.

Isidore left for Ferrara on 8 September, 1437, with a suite numbering over a hundred. His part at the Council stood determined in advance, and when, in 1441, he re-entered Moscow he duly did so in the scarlet robes of an "Apostolic Nuncio" of Rome's commissioning. But a fatal hitch awaited him. When he had delivered to Vasiliï an autograph letter from his Holiness, and invited Vasiliï to attend a special Pontifical Mass, he made the mistake, during that rite, of replacing the prayer for the Orthodox Patriarch with a prayer for the Pope, and then ascending the *ambon*, and reading thence, after the Offices, the recent Church Council's reunion resolution. True, he probably conceived this to be his duty, but Vasiliï straightway forgot the sanctity of the cathedral's precincts, and, rising in his place, poured forth upon Isidore a stream of abuse—called him "a knave and a traitor," and bade him be haled from the altar's very steps to seclusion in the Chudovoi Monastery. True, Isidore soon escaped thence and made his way to Tver (where for a while, however, he again suffered internment at the hands of the local prince), and thence by way of Novrodek to Rome: but never again was he able to return to Russia. As for Vasiliï, he, with Isidore thus departed, convened the Synod, and solemnly announced to its members that neither he nor his people intended ever to accept reunion as an accomplished fact.

The unification of the Russian land which Russia's

early princes began upon was energetically carried on by most of their successors, and attained final consummation under Vasili's son and Vasili's grandson, Ivan III and Vasili III. The former, born in 1440, helped his father in his State work from quite a youthful age, and, after the father's death in 1462, annexed yet further appanages, and increased his *boyars'* subjection, and reduced his vassalage to the Horde to a mere theoretical relation. His dream was, always, to make Russia one compact, all-powerful State, no matter what bloodshed of his people that might cost. And therefore he may be said to have founded the Russian autocracy more than any one else did, and, whilst not strictly one of Russia's reformers, whilst not even a Peter the Great in little, to have realized at least what reform might effect. For example, he was the first Muscovite grand prince to invite foreign artists to Court, and have them embellish his capital. Also, he had the Muscovite militia provided with their first fire-arms—though less through fear of the Mongols, to whom he still stood nominally subject, than through fear of the very real foes represented by the Lithuanians and the Poles, and the more so as, like most Russians of the day, he considered the last-named to be foes also to the Orthodox faith which, more than all other factors, had helped Russia to unification, and made of that unification a national idea. Indeed, neither a common tongue nor common characteristics formed Muscovite Russia into a Russian nation. What accomplished that was Orthodoxy. And if Moscow still kept the Turk and the Mongol outside the fold, she did so merely because they cherished another faith than hers. "Let but the Turks and the Mongols accept Orthodoxy," she said, "and they too will rank as Russian." In Moscow's eyes the foreigner remained a foreigner from the religious standpoint only, and not from the ethnographical. Her true foe was, in her eyes, the "heretic,"

the Catholic, a foe who, according to Orthodoxy's tenets, must never be left in peace. That religious attitude, an attitude rough-hewn by the Princes of Suzdal and finished off by the Tsars of Muscovy, at least explains why the Muscovite princes not only worked steadily to replace the Horde's authority over Russia with that of Moscow, but also displayed such implacable hostility against their neighbours on the west.

Those neighbours Ivan III, for his part, sought to restrain through a Muscovite alliance with Khan Mengli-Ghirei of the Crimea. Such an alliance, he considered, would serve him as a two-bladed weapon. To the west it would hold back Poland. To the east it would be employable against the Horde—for Mengli-Ghirei hated the latter with a bitterness equal to Ivan's own. Then, with safeguards to either side of him thus established, Ivan proceeded to suppress, or alternatively to annex, the last-remaining Russian principalities of autonomous status. In 1463 he annexed Yaroslav and purchased Rostov. In 1480 he finally rendered Novgorod a Muscovite dependent. And though sixteen years earlier Tver had, through fear of Moscow, allied itself with Casimir of Poland, Moscow now forced that principality to break off the alliance, and banished Michael, the Tveran prince, abroad.

When Ivan finally subdued Novgorod he did so in company with his three younger brothers. And then they quarrelled with him because of his detention of an envoy of theirs, one Prince Ivan Obolenski-Lyko, and in revenge concluded an agreement with Novgorod and Lithuania, and took possession of some Muscovite territory. True, they were speedily evicted thence, and compelled to seek Lithuania for refuge, but fortune was yet to smile upon their lot: she did so when Ivan, on being attacked by Khan Mohammed, had perforce to turn to his brothers again, and pay them for renewed help with grants of Muscovite land in perpetuity. Then

the eldest of the three brothers, Andrew, died, and Ivan reannexed his Muscovite allotment. And then the second brother died, and Ivan repeated the process. And as regards the third brother, Ivan got hands upon his allotment again by alleging against him failure to provide an agreed-upon military contingent.

When Casimir of Poland passed away the throne of Poland devolved to Alexander Jagiello. And anxiety for a reconciliation with Russia led Alexander, a ruler of mediocre abilities, to sue for the hand of Ivan's daughter Helena. To this request the grand prince eventually consented. But he did so on condition that Alexander signed perpetual peace with Moscow and also recognized the grand prince as All-Russian Tsar. In 1495 Alexander did as stipulated. And in return he received the Princess Helena. At once, it need hardly be said, Ivan used the arrangement to get a finger into Lithuania's affairs, and whilst waiting for his prey welcomed to Moscow all and sundry of Lithuania's *boyars*, and gave them employment. Finally (this was in 1500) he seized for his needed pretext an assertion that the Orthodox population in Lithuania was being ill-treated by the Catholic, and, declaring war against his son-in-law, annexed most of that son-in-law's most desirable towns.

Ivan III's first wife was Maria Borisovna, a princess from Tver, who died in 1469 after bearing him a son of the same name as his own. Then, as he realized dynastic considerations to forbid his remaining permanently a widower, and at the same time rifts were opening between himself and his subjects, he decided upon choice of a foreign spouse rather than of a native, and sent for (at all events there now appeared upon the scene) an Italian whom, though named, properly speaking, Gian Battista de la Volpe, the old chroniclers call, rather, "Ivan Friazin," since "Frizon,"¹ or "Frank,"² was the term which in those days Russians contemptuously

¹ Frieslander.

² Frenchman.

applied to each and every foreigner. It would be hard to say who Volpe was in reality. We know merely that in 1469 Ivan made him his "keeper of the purse," and, through either force or persuasion, an Orthodox convert. Probably with equal facility would Volpe have become Catholic again had circumstances required it. For task he was to arrange a marriage between the Muscovite grand prince and Princess Zoe Palæologus of Byzantium, an orphaned niece of the last emperor to rule that State. Since the fall of Constantinople she had been living at Rome as a ward of the Pope's, and naturally the marriage scheme in question met with Rome's enthusiastic approval, seeing that very likely the princess would prove an efficient Catholic propagandist in Russia. So, a Consistory having been convened, the necessary papal consent was obtained. The puzzling point about the affair is how on earth Ivan ever contrived to procure his courtiers' and his people's acceptance of a union between their Orthodox prince and a Catholic foreigner. Yet the Muscovite chronicle, *Voskresenskaia Lietopis*, says merely: "Ivan, desiring to wed again, did long treat with the metropolitan and his mother and the *boyars*, and then send ambassadors unto the Pope." Probably the truth is that the people of Moscow felt flattered rather than disgusted, seeing that even then the olden-time title (Tsargrad¹) of Constantinople could stir Muscovite memories of the past, and evoke Muscovite hopes for the future.

So Volpe started from Rome with Zoe (renamed Sophia), and a Papal Nuncio named Bonumbro, and a numerous suite. And, on reaching Pskov, the first Russian town to be encountered after the long journey across Europe, they walked in procession with the local clergy to the cathedral. And in the cathedral the awkward incident occurred that, though Bonumbro whispered to Sophia not to bow to the Magi as Orthodoxy

¹ Or Tsargorod. "City of the Emperor."

prescribed, Sophia disregarded him, and so signified before all men that she, hitherto considered to be a model daughter of Rome, had nevertheless dropped the Catholic faith, forgotten Rome, and substituted for Catholicism Orthodoxy.

Then came the state entry into Moscow. And again, according to chroniclers, there occurred an awkward incident. Whilst yet the princess's cortège was some distance from the city the grand prince had hastily to summon the council of *boyars*, for couriers had reported that Cardinal Bonumbro was marching along with a Catholic crucifix before him, and very likely the sight of this emblem of Latinity would offend the good Muscovites, seeing that, whereas the Church of the East permitted a cross bare of the Holy Figure only, the Catholic crucifix, of course, had the Saviour upon its branches. Yet it would scarcely do for the council to protest at the city's very gates. What, then, would be the best course? Some of the councillors said that eyes could be closed to the spectacle, but others said that even this might not avert a scene. Torn with perplexity the prince turned at last to the metropolitan, Philip. And the metropolitan replied that "such a Latin demonstration within the borders of Moscow herself" must not be permitted. "Never yet hath such an honour been done unto a Popish messenger. Should that messenger, *with his crucifix*, enter this our good Moscow by one gate, straightway do I, your father in Christ, depart by another one." And, this clinching matters, a *boyar* named Fedor Danilovitch was dispatched with special instructions, and Bonumbro, to his credit, accepted the situation without demur, and the occasion ended peacefully.

After her marriage Sophia proved herself a zealous worker in her consort's schemes for embellishing his capital and modernizing his militia—it was she who, for the former of those purposes, first advised him to employ

Italian architects and artists and other craftsmen. The architects included in particular, a celebrated native of Bologna named Aristotele Fioraventi degli Alberti. Invited at the same time to visit the Turkish Court, he nevertheless accorded the Kremlin the preference, and brought with him a son and a pupil. True, Ivan paid him less than Sultan Mohammed paid Gentile Bellini, but, for all that, it was Aristotele who gave Moscow her (amongst other buildings) Cathedral of the Assumption. At the same time, Ivan did not allow his preoccupation with art to involve neglect of the city's defence, but, on the contrary, commissioned an Italian named Solario to design a new wall and towers for the Kremlin. Also it was Solario who built the Gate of the Saviour leading on to the Red Square. Moscow's manners and morals, however, did not undergo a similar betterment. They still remained so rude and primitive that the grand prince who gave the capital fine churches lay by night upon a bed of hay or straw, and, in general, observed a standard of life in no way superior to that of his *boyars*, of the citizens, and even of the peasantry. Nor did drunkenness now decrease, nor yet vice, especially vice of the more unnatural sorts. In fact, such was the extent of the former as to lead a Venetian traveller named Contarini, who toured Russia during the fourteenth century, to write of Moscow:

Here the men and the women alike are comely, yet have a beastlike air. And a hideous plague ravageth all, of every degree, and that plague is drunkenness, so that Moscow's familiar spirit would indeed seem to be the spirit of the bottle. One meeteth here even nobles in liquor. And those nobles do boast of the same, and, to boot, maltreat them who remain temperate.

And the Metropolitan Daniel is found denouncing certain "womanish men," and an anonymous letter sent to Ivan IV makes mention of a similar subject. At the same time, the Venetian traveller might not unjustly

have added that the Muscovites of the day also possessed the virile qualities of persistence and endurance, and were good colonists, and could easily adapt themselves. As for education, progress in it certainly remained slow, and the ability to read and write almost non-existent, whilst women still were confined to the *terem*, and Ivan's care to import artists and craftsmen for Moscow's adornment did not go with any corresponding care to found schools, to extend general knowledge, to introduce printing, to direct social ideas, and, in short, to evolve a generation capable of assimilating the results of progress. No. Culture remained confined almost wholly within the walls of Church establishments. And even there the monks and *diaks* (ecclesiastical clerks) knew no more than enabled them to study liturgical and devotional manuals, tales from the Apocrypha, annals, and legal-official documents—in general, the literary field still continued a desert in which the popular *bylini* (orally transmitted folk-tales) alone showed the people to have lurking in it a literary faculty capable of improvement.

All Russian historians agree in ascribing to Sophia's influence the final break with the power of Mongolia. Its immediate occasion arose in 1472, when Casimir IV of Poland egged on Khan Mohammed (whom the Russian chroniclers call Ahmed) to threaten Moscow once more, and Sophia, in return, incited her husband to expel Mohammed's diplomatic and commercial agents from the Kremlin, and to line the Oka with troops. Four years later Moscow definitely refused the Horde further tribute, but four years later, again, on Ivan and his brothers joining issue with Novgorod, and Ivan thereby exposing his flank, Mohammed returned to the charge, advanced upon Moscow, and was brought to a halt only by proposals for a parley. During this halt Ivan re-tightened up his alliance with the Khan of the Crimea, finished off his military reorganization, and so was able, on the

Tartars resuming their advance and reaching the Oka, to make them find it barred against their further progress along the whole of its length. Then Ivan failed to rise to the occasion. Leaving his army to look after itself, he returned to Moscow, dispatched his wife and valuables northward, and sat down to await events. Not until both the clergy and the citizens of the capital heaped him with reproaches did he, after temporarily seeking escape thence in his summer residence outside Moscow, join his forces once more. And even then he forbore to strike a decisive (or any other) blow. All that he did was to send the khan presents, and beg him not to ravage Russia's territory. Not the most vehement reproaches from his people, coupled with a particularly incisive letter from the Bishop of Rostov, succeeded in effecting more than at least interrupting this ignominious truckling to the Horde—they quite failed to move Ivan from his purely passive and defensive attitude. Lucky for him was it that Mohammed also dallied, owing to his reluctance to move before he should have formed a junction with Casimir—who in reality was being held up by the Crimean khan. The situation, in fact, remained thus until Moscow received a second ally. That ally was the fall of winter, an ally summarily compelling the insufficiently clad Mongols to retreat. A year later a rival assassinated Mohammed in his tent, and the Mongolian yoke finally became but a Russian memory.

Next, as the country's material resources were now much improved, and the Mongolian question settled, Ivan cast about as to whom to make his heir. For he knew that such an heir must be capable of finishing and consolidating the work of himself and his predecessors, yet also that, though his eldest son had, before that son's death, bequeathed his right of succession to his orphaned child Dimitri, Sophia likewise had produced a son, and therefore the latter might become another claimant to

the throne, and, at that, a dangerous one. And soon Ivan found his fears justified. Plots and counterplots did begin, and led Ivan to believe allegations against Sophia's honour, intern her in a convent, and on 4 February, 1498, advance to such an unprecedented step as an anticipatory coronation of Dimitri. Then four years more elapsed, and Dimitri, in his turn, fell into disfavour, and Sophia was restored to her place on the throne beside her husband, and Vasili her son finally proclaimed heir.

Vasili's accession took place in 1505. As a lad born with both Russian and Byzantine blood in his veins, he, whilst not really talented and whilst handicapped through having to stand between the giant figures of his father and his son,¹ holds a place in our history as the ultimate completer of Russia's unification. In 1510 he annexed Pskov. Later he annexed Riazan and Novgorod-Sieverski, the last two principalities possessed of independence. And in all these cases he made his method the method of summoning the prince to Moscow on an allegation of treason, and then secluding him in confinement. Lastly, he saw to the question of external defence. This was forced upon him by the fact that Khan Mohammed-Ghirei of the Crimea, who had succeeded Mengli-Ghirei, suddenly abjured his father's policy of Muscovite friendship, became reconciled with Poland, and flung a Tartar army at Moscow. Vasili, unfortunately, was no Dimitri Donskoi as regards courage and leadership. As soon as he heard that the foe from the Crimea had been joined also by some Noghai Tartars and Dnieperian Cossacks he fled northward, and the city was saved from Tartar devastation only through a brave defence offered by the local garrison and the local *boyars*.

By Salomina Saburova, Vasili's consort, he had no issue, and the fact so disturbed him (for he feared an extinction of the dynasty) that at last the *boyars* who

¹ Afterwards Ivan IV, Ivan the Terrible.

had saved his crown for him when he had fled northward so far pitied his trouble as to advise a divorce. And after some hesitation he took this advice, and in 1527 the Metropolitan Daniel wedded him to the young and beautiful Lithuanian Princess Helena Glinski, and there sprang from this late-contracted union the sovereign whom history knows as Ivan the Terrible.

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The childhood of Ivan the Terrible was a sort of inferno the lurid gleams of which never ceased to play over his life. His young soul then took perversity for its nourishment, and cruelty for its diversion. When, in 1533, his father died he, then aged three, was removed from the care of a mother now become discreditable through her amours, and entrusted to a regency consisting of the brothers Shinski and other *boyars*. And during this regency he had perforce to sit and look on whilst the regents frittered away the property of the Crown, and everywhere political murder and private assassination were the order of the day and his friends were despoiled and banished. Never, in after days, could he recall that time without a shudder, and in his famous correspondence with Prince Kurbski he lays particular emphasis—does so with a sort of cold fury—upon an occasion when one of the Shinskis actually placed his booted feet upon the imperial bed itself. Always, Ivan adds, he was half-starved, forced to witness purloinings of articles of the imperial household, even to its cups and plates of gold, and bullied rather than spoiled.

Then the age arrived when he himself could indulge in debauchery. Yet even then he seems to have indulged in it less for its own sake than because he wished to escape from himself and his surroundings. True, after roistering through the streets of Moscow, or strenuously pursuing the chase, he would return home

to sit and watch animals tortured until they died of their sufferings; but at the same time it may be said that quite possibly those animals represented to him the hated regents. And at length, in 1543, these regents' excesses did bring about a *révolution de palais* which Ivan seized upon as an excuse for having Andrew Shinski thrown to a pack of starving hounds, and the whole replaced with his Glinski uncles and a *diak* named Zakharov. Scarcely need it be added that those new regents, again, "liquidated" matters by cutting out a Buturlin's tongue, throwing a Vorontzov into prison, and so forth.

Three years later Ivan sent for the Metropolitan Makarius, and spent several hours with him in private. Then he convoked the council of *boyars*, and informed it that he intended first to be crowned and then to be married. Already the title of Tsar, or Cæsar, was familiar to the Muscovites, for it was under that style that Ivan's grandfather had crowned young Dimitri, and it had figured in more than one official Act, and Maximilian, Emperor of Germany, had thus addressed Ivan's father, and in 1473 the Doge of Venice had told Ivan's grandfather that if the Palæologus family should eventually fail of issue he (the Doge) should look upon that grandfather as the Byzantine heir, and Vasilii had pre-substantiated that eventuality by having suitably inscribed coins minted. Other factors accustoming Moscow's mentality to the notion that Moscow was both ancient Rome's and recent Byzantium's successor (was, as the current phrase had it, "the third and final Rome") were the circumstance that Byzantium had given Russia her Christianity, and the circumstance of Ivan III's espousal of a Byzantine princess.

Amid tumultuous scenes of patriotism and enthusiasm Ivan IV was crowned on 16 January, 1547. Yet, as has already been stated, the crown which his own hand then placed upon his head was not a Byzantine *vienetz*, but a

Tartar *shapka* presented to, probably, Ivan II, since it is in that ruler's testament that the article first finds mention. And when, amid ringings of bells innumerable, and through a vast concourse of people, Ivan IV had passed to the cathedral, to the scene of his coronation, the clergy prayed that he might uphold truth and justice and become the father of his poor, and protect the Church. After which three relays of *boyars* threw showers of gold pieces upon him, in token that his dominions might be for ever prosperous. And thenceforth (chroniclers tell us) he signed his State documents with the formula: "Ivan, Tsar, Grand Prince, and Autocrat Sovereign of Great Russia"; whilst later he had his dignity still further aggrandized with a rigmarole which mystically invoked the Trinity, and then went on to enumerate Moscow's past grand princes, and, lastly, cited a fantastic genealogy whereby Ivan stood descended from Augustus of Rome himself—the descent being traced through means of a legendary division of the world amongst his heirs by Augustus, and Augustus's assignment of the regions of the Vistula and the Nie-men to a brother named "Prus," who begat Rurik's first ancestors. Also, in 1561, with a view to flattering still more the powerful new ruler of Moscow, the Byzantine Patriarch, Josephus, solemnly declared Moscow to be a wholly independent and sovereign State, and only the posterity of the Princess Anna, Vladimir I's Byzantine spouse, to have the right to perpetual tenure of the *Tsarstvo*. Fortunately for Ivan, he stood unaware that on the patriarchal patent to this effect there were only two really genuine signatures, those of the Patriarch and his vicar. The remaining thirty-five signatures—which purported to be those of the whole body of metropolitans and archbishops of the Eastern Church—had been forged by a Byzantine law writer, since a convocation of the requisite synod had not been opportune.



E.N.A.

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

The coronation ceremony over, Ivan instituted such preparations for his nuptials as smack almost of Biblical story. For, as his bride was literally to be "one in a thousand," the head of Russia's every noble family was ordered, on pain of death, to forward any daughter or daughters of his to his local chief town, where delegates armed with minute and personal instructions from the Tsar inspected the maidens, sorted out the best-looking of them, dispatched them to Moscow, and lodged them, in batches of ten, in a great building specially set aside for the purpose. Lastly the Tsar, attended by an aged *boyar*, came and looked over the assortment and made his choice, and signified it by handing the chosen one a handkerchief and a ring. The selected maiden in the case proved to be Anastasia Romanovna Zakharina Uryna, and the wedding was celebrated with semi-Asiatic pomp on 15 February, 1547.

Two months later Moscow was swept with a threefold wave of fire, and every one of her wooden houses (which of course constituted the majority) destroyed, and many a building of stone damaged. Meanwhile the people ran hither and thither in superstitious terror, and declared sorcery to have been at work and, most of all, on the part of the Glinski family and the Tsar's grandmother. So first they dragged that grandmother's son, Yurii, from the cathedral precincts in which he had taken refuge, and tore him in pieces; and then they set to work to ravage the Glinski family's property wherever it could be found, and to beat the family's servants. And if it had not been for use of armed force the mob would have assaulted Ivan's summer residence.

In time Ivan fell much under the influence of the Metropolitan Makarius and a monk named Sylvester—the latter being the Tsar's almoner and "keeper of the conscience." To these two men, indeed, probably is due the fact that when Ivan attained his twentieth year he altered slightly in his treatment of his subjects,

and bade every province and every town choose delegates for session in a *Zemski Sobor*, or National Assembly, and personally opened the *Sobor*, and also commissioned it to compose a new *Sudebnik* (Legal Code) in place of the one published by Ivan III, and likewise to establish tribunals on the jury system. More: to give emphasis to the fact that he wished the supreme power to associate itself with the people direct, he one day issued into the Red Square and, taking up his position opposite the Gate of the Saviour, close to where it was the custom to carry out civil executions, declaimed: "Although it is not possible for me wholly to amend the many ills and the many injustices which have been done, I yet do promise unto you that at least those ills and those injustices shall not be repeated. Forget all that hath been done. That which hath been shall be no more. Banish from your hearts hatred and discord. Become united in Christian love. Pursue only that which is equitable. Always will I be your judge and your defender." At the same period he appointed a minor *boyar* named Alexis Adashev to receive petitions addressed to the throne, and a year later he convened a synod, and bade it issue a work which history knows as the *Stoglav*, or *Book of a Hundred Chapters*—a production designed to better the lot of the Russian Church and clergy.

Hence the reign opened with a certain brilliance. Nor did Ivan forget that he was also a military commander, and that all around his country stood Swedish, Livonian, Polish, and other foes eager to bar Russia from the Baltic and the West—so eager that when, in 1546, Ivan sent a Saxon named Schlitt to search Germany for engineers and artisans, and Schlitt had secured a hundred or so, and was ready to convey them to Russia, the Order of Swordbearing Knights in Livonia forbade them to traverse Livonian territory, and they had to return home again: whilst in 1561 the very same Sigismund of Poland who was wont to dub Russians "barbarians"

and to accuse them of failing fully to avail themselves of European progress, issued a proclamation that he would confiscate any ship of any nationality found landing arms at a Baltic port on Muscovy's account. Unfriendly elements existed also at home in the shape of the Tartar *ulusi* (camp settlements) around Kazan and Astrakhan, and in the Crimea. Ivan first moved against those settlements in 1552—he mustered some of his new *strieltsi* (musketeers), reinforced them with one hundred and fifty field pieces and a few foreign experts, and began an assault upon Kazan on the morning of Sunday, 2 October. When the first mine went off he was having Mass said in his tent, and the explosion coincided with the priest's utterance of the words: "One flock there shall be, and one shepherd." At once the Tsar stepped outside the tent to observe what the explosion had wrought. Then he returned, and Mass continued. The second mine went off just as the ceremony came to an end, and upon that the Tsar gave the order for an assault and, as the result, the town fell into his hands. Five years later Astrakhan, with its small Bashkir khanates, was taken. These successes, of course, caused repercussions afar, and led to the Caucasian chieftains tumbling over themselves in their haste to signify readiness to enter into relations with the powerful ruler of Moscow, and Elizhaer of Siberia to say with equal haste that he would willingly pay tribute if his dominions could be left unmolested. Next came the turn of the Crimean khan, who in 1555 had sought to forestall attack from Moscow by invading the Ukraine and, near Tula, defeating a Russian force under Sheremetiev. Now, however, a force commanded by Tsar Ivan in person sent him fleeing back to the Crimea, whilst Ivan set a body of Dnieperian Cossacks, under a *hetman* named Dimitri Vychnevetski, to loot and ravage his khanate.

After that khanate, Livonia. Some persons consider

this Livonian campaign to have been a mistake; but the truth is that we see in it an historical necessity, an event rendered absolutely inevitable if Russia was to continue her policy of an attempted break-through to the Baltic and the West—it did but constitute the logical sequel to the struggle with the Swedes on the Neva, and with the Polotskan princes beside the Baltic.

Meanwhile political and domestic cares and his *boyars'* ingratitude, cowardice, and cruelty led to a re-hardening of Ivan's character, and to such an extinction of Sylvester's and Adashev's influence for improvement that he came to hate those counsellors even as he had once hated the regents. The last tie between them and him snapped when, during an illness of 1553, as he was lying stretched upon his bed, he asked of his *boyars* an oath of allegiance to his son Ivan, and was told that most of the *boyars* would rather swear fealty to Ivan's nephew, Vladimir—amongst that majority being Sylvester and Adashev themselves. Probably what the dissentients had in their minds on this occasion was that the Tsar would never recover: but recover he did, and those who had opposed him about the succession resorted to the traditional manœuvre of flight. For a while Ivan made no overt sign—it was as though first he were getting his vengeance trimmed. Then in 1560, his first wife Anastasia having recently died, he sent Sylvester into exile, and Adashev to be Governor of Dorpat, and tortured or slew the rest.

However, Ivan obtained a temporary distraction from his cares of State through reception of the news, during the October of 1553, that a vessel flying the English flag had arrived at the mouth of the Northern Dvina, and was lying off the two monasteries which later grew into the town of Archangel. Ivan greatly wondered how this vessel had contrived to enter the White Sea. And upon that followed the further news that the vessel was one of three which belonged to the

English "Company of Merchant Adventurers" and, under a Sir Hugh Willoughby and a Captain Richard Chancellor, had been commissioned to discover a north-east European-American passage, and being dispersed by a storm off the coast of Lapland, had had two of their number, the *Bona Speranza* and the *Bona Confidentia*, driven into an estuary, and the third, the *Edward Bonaventura*, blown round Cape Sviatoi into the sea where she now was. And the English Government's knowledge of routes and parts had been so vague that Edward VI had merely addressed his charter "unto all Kings, Princes, Lords, and Judges of this World, and the Officers of the same, and whomsoever holdeth high authority within the inhabited universe." Captain Chancellor, the officer commanding the *Edward Bonaventura*, knew no more of the domain off which he had come to anchor than that it belonged to "the Tsar of Muscovy." And as for the Governor of Kholmogori and the local population of trappers, fishermen, monks, exiles, and the rest, none of them had ever before beheld a European vessel, and all were amazed. Then Ivan had the seamen forwarded to Moscow, welcomed them there in person, commanded that Edward VI's charter should be translated into Russian, and, in February next year, sent Edward, by Chancellor's hand, a reply. The reply, received by Philip and Mary (for Edward had passed away meanwhile), stated that "duly have We welcomed thy faithful servant Richard and his companions, and they have beheld Our Majesty and Our Presence," and that the Tsar had given orders for the two missing ships to be searched for,¹ and that he begged England's ruler to send "a councillor" to Moscow, and that, in return, he would grant England free entry of her merchandise into Russia.

The vicissitudes of the struggle in Livonia brought

¹ The ships were found next year, but by then their crews had perished of cold and hunger.

Russia into collision also with Poland and Stephen Bathory of Transylvania, who represented Autocracy versus Aristocratic Independence, Catholicism versus Orthodoxy. And, as a vassal of the Sultan, Stephen had Ottoman-Tartar support behind him. Hence, though Stephen himself had feared the rivalry of Ivan with regard to candidature for the Polish throne whenever that throne should fall vacant, it was the former whom, on Augustus's death, the Poles chose for their next ruler. In 1581, however, the Russians made such an heroic stand against Stephen and his Poles near Pskov that Stephen had no choice but to retreat and sue for peace. Upon which Ivan requested the Pope's good offices as mediator—said that he would be glad if "the Sovereign Pontiff will command that King Stephen do forswear his alliance of heretofore with the Mussulman, and forgo further warrings against peoples which are Christian," and in company with himself, the Tsar, declare war against Stephen's suzerain the Sultan. So in response Gregory III sent eastward a Jesuit named Antonio Possevino, with the double commission of arranging a Polish-Muscovite anti-Turkish alliance and of effecting Church reunion. Possevino first of all saw Bathory at Vilna, and reproached him for having joined the Turk in conflict with Christians: and Bathory responded that he had only followed Ivan's example. "Ivan did, through his marriage with Khan Temriuk's daughter,¹ cause his blood to become mingled with Islam's own." So, that being Bathory's attitude, Possevino completed his journey to Russia, met the Tsar at Starodub ("Verily might the Tsar have been a bishop seated upon his throne!"), and was requested again to see Bathory, definitely make peace with him on Russia's behalf, and for the time being shelve the reunion part of the business. Possevino, therefore, did so—he went and presided whilst the accredited

¹ This wife died in 1569.

plenipotentiaries of Poland and Russia conferred with one another in a smoky hut. Finally, after that the negotiations had run the usual course of the period (that is to say, after that there had been an immense amount of shouting and arguing followed by a solemn, ceremonial slapping of fist into fist in token of ultimate agreement), Moscow, on 15 January, 1582, found herself committed to let Poland have possession of Polotsk and Livonia again, and herself to remain, as before, debarred from access to the Baltic! And, on Possevino regaining the Muscovite capital and seeking next to proceed to the items of reunion and the anti-Turkish crusade, he found to his amazement that the Tsar had, in his absence, signed a truce with the Tartars of the Crimea, and so rendered a crusade against the Sultan absolutely impossible. And, seeing that the Tsar also showed himself to be not particularly amenable over the reunion part of the business, and, as one much fancying himself as a theologian, indulged in much railing at the Pope because he shaved his chin, and had himself carried about in the *sedile gestatorium*, and his toe kissed by the faithful, Possevino decided that to stay longer in Moscow would be a waste of time, and, leaving Ivan to his slayings and torturings, retraced his steps to Rome.

As a matter of fact, have we any reliable evidence as to those slayings and torturings beyond foreigners' tales, Prince Kurbski's letters, and certain necrological lists? Of these, the last-named do not demonstrably contain names of persons slain or tortured at all; whilst, as regards the foreigners' tales, they are so vague and wanting in exactitude that they ought to be accepted under reserve only. Kurbski's letters, then, remain. Now these letters were composed only when their author had, after a quarrel of the most deadly kind with his master, removed himself abroad. Accordingly, when they were composed Kurbski at least was not in a position to receive news from Moscow at first

hand. And such was their author's hatred of the Tsar to whom he addressed them that he had deserted that Tsar's service, and replaced it with service of his country's very worst enemy, the Polish king. Again, a motive which may have actuated Kurbski (who was at all times of the type of a Lithuanian prince rather than of the type of a Muscovite *boyar*) in the writing of the letters may have been offence because his friends Sylvester and Adashev had met with downfall. At all events the fact remains that, after first availing himself of his position as commander of the Russian army in Livonia to establish disloyal relations with King Sigismund, and then letting his fifteen thousand Russians be defeated by four thousand Poles at Nevel in 1562, he abandoned his wife and children to possible vengeance at the hands of his master Ivan, and, definitely seceding to the Polish camp, indited thence the tragic, heated, eloquent letters in question, letters which vehemently accused the Tsar of cruelty, denounced him and his deceased parents as "swillers of blood," and termed the Polish king "my present sovereign." It is said that when Ivan encountered this latter passage, as he read the letter in which the passage was contained, his fury led him unconsciously to brandish aloft his ironshod staff, and that, as the staff descended, it nailed to the floor the foot of the messenger by whom the letter had been brought.

Shortly after Kurbski's dispatch of the first letter of the series he invaded Polotsk with seventy thousand Poles—which, of course, showed him openly to have turned traitor to his country. And at about the same period Ivan's attitude towards his *boyars* underwent a change. From the first those *boyars'* constant efforts to make themselves the administrative directors of the State had earned for them the detestation of a ruler who in no way shared the liberal ideas which Kurbski had imbibed from Maxim the Greek and other such writers: and now this factor inspired Ivan with the

perverse notion that a telling blow at his *bêtes noires* could best be struck through temporary withdrawal of himself from Moscow, the Court, and the *boyar* council in favour of some spot where he could, in retirement, at once nurse his resentment and watch events. So on 3 December, 1564, he, with his wife (his second) Maria, his children, some servants, some attendants, the valuables of the Crown, the icons of the family, and a strong escort, departed to a suburban monastery, and thence from monastery to monastery until finally he decided to make Alexandrovsk, a settlement in the vicinity of Vladimir, his temporary abode. There he sat down to observe how things might go, and the more carefully because, for all his longing for a riddance of courtiers and *boyars* wholesale, he did not forget the possible risk of their downfall involving a downfall also of the throne, and the necessity, therefore, of taking no grave step until he had made absolutely sure of either support from, or neutrality on the part of, the people at large.

The sudden departure certainly did evoke a profound sensation. For long the inhabitants of the capital hung absolutely upon tenterhooks of suspense. Then just a month after the departure in question the Metropolitan Athanasius received from the Tsar a letter in which, after denouncing the *boyars'* delinquency toward both himself and the country, and adding to that an accusation that the clergy protected the *boyars*, Ivan merely remarked that "in some such place as the Lord's good pleasure may shortly reveal unto me" he meant to live removed for ever from palace intrigue and aristocratic treason. The result of the letter was that, to beg the Tsar's return, there went to Alexandrovsk a deputation drawn from all classes, and headed by Archbishop Pimen of Novgorod. This, of course, placed the simple Muscovites under the Tsar's very thumb. Yes, he would return, he said, after a few preliminary civilities. But he would return only on his own terms, and those

terms were that thenceforth he should be absolutely at liberty, firstly, to "chastise traitors," and, secondly, to appropriate for his own personal use a portion of the national property, both movable and immovable.

And as soon as the terms had been agreed to he divided the State, in curious fashion, into a "Zemstchina" and an "Oprichnina." Of these, the former was to be administered by the *boyar* council and the Princes Bielski and Mstislavski, with the Tsar retaining in it only a Civil List and the right of "chastisement of traitors." And the latter was to be a portion of the State composed of sundry provincial and metropolitan districts, and administered solely by Ivan. Ivan did the thing thoroughly. First he cleared all its original inhabitants out of the "Oprichnina" portion, and then he put there, in their place, a staff of "personal service" *boyars* and other employees. Also, he constituted an "Oprichnina bodyguard." Then this force, a force of about six thousand, and mixed to the last degree as regards personnel, and possessed of a badge of a dog's head and a broom, to signify that its members stood "ever ready to rend the Tsar's foes and to cleanse the land of all treason," proceeded, under Ivan's personal direction, to commit excesses almost past belief. Not but that still more astonishing is the fact that Ivan himself could share in those excesses, and throw into them, as he did, all the perversity and cruelty which had distinguished him during his earlier years. Meanwhile he lived mostly at Alexandrovsk. There he organized and fortified an establishment in which one Maliuta Shuratov acted both as chief cellarer and as captain of bodyguard, and everything was carried on on pseudo-monastic lines—he himself masquerading as the place's "Prior" and Prince Viaghemski as its "Sub-Prior," and everyone bearing a part equally in the routine of bell-ringing and liturgical recital and in the routine of devastation of towns and districts. One

such raid caused Novgorod alone to see her streets run with blood for a month or more, and her slain and tortured to amount to over fifteen hundred. Also, for denouncing their enormities, the "Oprichnina" body-guard deprived Philip, Moscow's aged, universally beloved metropolitan, of his office, shut him up in a convent, and put him to death through strangulation. The same with Prince Vladimir, Ivan's nephew, when Ivan took it into his head that the prince might one day become a claimant to the throne. Finally, one day when the Tsar and his eldest son were discussing the military disasters in Livonia the former so lost self-control as to raise his staff and deal the Tsarevitch a blow which four days later brought about the young man's death. To his last moment Ivan rued this deed. In fact, from the day of its committal he steadily deteriorated in health, and came to be able neither to rest in the daytime nor to sleep by night.

In 1579 the Stroganovs, a famous family of Novgorod who owned extensive mining and other properties in the Urals, engaged an *ataman* named Yermak and a large force of Cossacks to guard the properties in question. And two years later Mongolian attacks upon those properties led to Yermak and his force crossing the Urals, and falling upon the Khanate of Sibir established during the thirteenth century by Chenghis Khan. Sibir, the city, stood close to where the rivers Tobol and Irtish conjoin, and was ruled in Ivan's day by a Finn-Mongol named Kutchum, and always had refused to pay Moscow tribute. For the moment Yermak and his force carried the town, and expelled its Finno-Tartar garrison: but, that done, they failed permanently to maintain their position, owing to a gradual wearing-down of their numbers through ambuscades, and to Yermak's death in 1584—he being drowned whilst attempting to swim a river in a gilded cuirass which the Tsar had given him. Then Ivan himself died, after that his disease

had become so advanced as to shred his skin into strips, and to rot his bones with caries, and to cause his whole form to exude an insupportable odour. When, on 18 March, 1584, the end came it found him lying clad, as usual, in his "monastic" habit.

Ivan was abnormal and cruel to a point which even the manners of the age and his knowledge of contemporary humanity's iniquity cannot excuse. Yet also he had in him that which a chronicler terms "an understanding which easily can cleave and enlighten all things." That is to say, whereas humane ideas were as foreign to him as they were to the Sultan of Turkey, the Shah of Persia, and his own *boyars*, he was so erudite, so widely read, that with equal facility he could quote the Bible, the Church's Fathers, the Œcumenical Councils' decrees, the classical writers, and sacred and profane history. This is particularly well seen in his polemic with Kurbski, as also is his possession of a quick, caustic pen—as when to Kurbski's assertion that his action had been dictated solely by regard for equity and the people's weal Ivan retorts: "Often hath God's will ordained that those who do good shall have to suffer for such doing. So wherefore is it that, though thou too accountest thyself a man just and honourable, thou dost not straightway make submission unto suffering, and deign to receive of me, thy lawful master, a martyr's crown?" The same capacity as a man of letters led Ivan to be first of Russian sovereigns to give his country a printing-press. And his notable qualities as a politician led him to be first of Russian sovereigns to convene a *Zemski Sobor*. Nor, despite the essentially autocratic nature of his political views, did he ever hesitate to submit them to public scrutiny. To the same argumentative instinct probably were due his copious letters to, and his love of intercourse with, European visitors; to whom—this applies especially to Englishmen, Dutchmen, and Germans—he always extended a cordial

welcome. And though many times he was deceived by visitors of the sort, he twice considered the idea of selecting a spouse from the West. In the first case the lady in view was one of King Sigismund's nieces, and in the second case she was Mary Hastings, a cousin of Queen Elizabeth of England. Possibly his plurality of wives (in all they numbered seven) itself came of the reason that he found them, one after another, no match for his intellect. All his life long he seems to have been alone, and to have believed himself misunderstood. Other reasons for his contempt for his entourage may have been the effects of the events of his youth, and the effects of the crisis of 1553. The fact remains that never since his day has the popular voice ceased to celebrate his takings of Kazan and Sibir, his Polish and Tartar campaigns, his treatment of his wives, his chastisement of "my treasonous *boyars*," and his eldest son's tragic death.

Upon Ivan's passing there ensued ecclesiastical troubles, difficulties with regard to the succession, and much social and economic disturbance. From Ivan's union with Anastasia Romanovna there had resulted two sons, the eldest of whom died, as we have seen, from a blow dealt him by his father. But though now, in the ordinary course, the crown stood to pass to the younger son Fedor, Ivan had cut across the canons of Orthodoxy by marrying a woman named Maria Nagoi, and having by her a third son, Dimitri. On his deathbed he entrusted the tutorship of this son to Prince Bogdan Bielski, and the latter and the boy's mother, as soon as Ivan was dead, protested against the accession of Fedor, on the ground that he was physically and mentally incompetent. So eventually, to meet the problem, the *boyar* council appointed as regents Ivan Mstislavski, Ivan Shuiski (the *boyar* who had defended Pskov against Stephen Bathory), Nikita Romanovitch (brother of the late Tsaritsa Anastasia), and Boris

Godunov (a member of a Tartar family who had been Ivan's favourite *Oprichnik*¹), and sent Dimitri and his mother to live in retirement in the town of Uglitch, and Bogdan Bielski to live in retirement in the town of Nizhni Novgorod.

But no sooner was peace thus seemingly re-established than a new personage appeared, who began to draw to himself the attention of all. Fedor, the recently acceded Tsar, had earlier taken for wife Irene, the sister of Boris Godunov. And Irene completely held sway over her consort, and herself was completely under the thumb of her brother Boris. Hence the latter now began to acquire considerable State influence. His rise to prominence he had owed in the first instance to the "*Oprichnina*." At that period he had been appointed private equerry to Ivan, and married to a daughter of Maliuta Skuratov; whilst later, when Fedor had married Irene, he, Boris, had been created "*hereditary boyar*." True, during Ivan's lifetime Boris had, for all his energy, cunning, cleverness, ambition, ruthlessness, and ability to retain Ivan's favour, often been slighted by his fellow-*boyars*; but, now that Ivan was dead and Fedor become Tsar, Boris conceived that he could at last turn the tables. This, sure enough, he did, for his possession of titles and honours soon enabled him to master the situation, and put himself in a position to dispense favours, to dispose of the State's finances, to conduct correspondence in the Tsar's name, and to treat direct with the Austrian emperor, the Queen of England, and the Polish sovereign: whilst after the death of Nikita Romanovitch, the Tsar's uncle, in 1585, Boris's influence on the *boyar* council, which had been inconsiderable during Nikita's lifetime, made such strides that when some of his colleagues on the council sought to form a *bloc* against him, and requested the Tsar to divorce his, Boris's, sister for her barrenness, and render the dynasty

¹ Member of the "*Oprichnina*" bodyguard.

secure through a second marriage, they failed signally, since Fedor loved his spouse too well to divorce her, and swore too thoroughly by Boris to heed anyone else, and all that came of the malcontent *boyars'* scheme was their own punishment and a deposition of their ally, the Metropolitan Dionis, in favour of Job, Bishop of Rostov.

Before Fedor's accession the mental and physical weakness which, after that event, necessitated his supervision by a regency council, had been such as to lead his father to forbid all intercourse between him and foreign visitors, and restrict him, mostly, to ringing church bells and breeding pigeons. And even when he had become Tsar the greater part of his time was devoted to family affairs, and the conduct of the State delegated to Boris Godunov. From Fletcher,¹ the English ambassador, we have an excellent description of the Tsar's routine each day. Rising at about four o'clock he would receive, and be shriven by, his confessor. And then he would visit his consort in her apartments, and discuss with her current affairs, and then, with that consort, attend Matins in a church of the Kremlin, and at nine o'clock hear Mass in a second church. And incidentally, says Fletcher, attendance at neither rite forbade of conversation meanwhile—the affairs of this world mingled quite indifferently with the affairs of the next. Then followed dinner and an interval of rest, and then diversion provided by minstrels, jugglers, dancers, buffoons, bears in combat, and the like. Lastly, supper, Vespers, and bed.

Fedor had as issue only a daughter who died when yet an infant. And when there followed upon that the death of his elder brother Dimitri at Uglitch, total extinction of the dynasty became practically certain. Meanwhile, however, the State improved not a little in orderliness and prosperity, for Boris Godunov

¹ Uncle of the dramatist.

suppressed the "Oprichnina" bodyguard, strengthened the Volga's defences in consequence of a peasant rising, and added to Moscow the quarter known as Bielgorod, or the White City. Also, under Boris's dispensation the foreign policy of Russia became more circumspect, and at the same time more vigorous. He made peace with Poland, put forward Fedor as a candidate, on Stephen Bathory's death, for the Polish throne, recovered from Sweden the territories which that country had conquered, augmented the defences of the Don and the Terek, and began upon an annexation of Georgia. Nor did he neglect Church affairs. In 1588, on the Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople visiting Moscow, he, Boris, procured that prelate's authority to raise the Muscovite metropolitanate to the rank of a patriarchate, and to confer the office upon, as its first holder, Bishop Job of Rostov. Thus the Russian Church gained abolition of her dependence in administrative matters upon Constantinople.

As a further innovation, Boris attached the peasantry to the soil. His prime motive in this policy was that he might check the Russian peasant's rooted addiction to moving about from place to place, and thereby create a rural population always stationary and therefore always accessible whenever the tax-gatherer might want it. And a second object was that thereby the smaller landed proprietors, the class whence the bureaucracy drew the bulk of its recruits, might be better enabled to compete economically with the wealthier section. The *ukaz* of 1597, in short, disqualified the peasant from changing either his master or his home.

On 7 January, 1598, Fedor died and, in the direct line, the House of Rurik became finally extinct. For some time past it had been whispered that Boris Godunov could have revealed things about the young Tsarevitch Dimitri's death some seven years earlier; but this is not so—the lad had been born of a late-contracted union



THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW

and, at that, had had for sire an elderly debauchee, and as such, as a patient suffering from epilepsy, had one day fallen forward upon his head and sustained thence an injury which led to blood-poisoning. Nevertheless the tales clung to Boris to the end of his life.

Fedor's widow, Irene, took the veil and became "Sister Alexandra" when her consort's obsequies had been performed, whilst the management of the State passed to the council of *boyars* and the new Patriarch Job. And though this might have opened the door to ambition, and justified the Shuiskis and the Romanovitches (a family destined soon to drop the final syllable from its name) in basing claims to the crown upon a certain kinship with the late monarch, nothing of the kind happened for the reason that these *boyars* and everyone else had to give way, in the respect named, to Boris Godunov, for long past the *de facto* Tsar of Russia, and now a personage risen to a height whence he could not easily be dislodged. All that Boris needed, indeed, was the purely popular sanction: and that he obtained with no great difficulty, since on his side were "Sister Alexandra," the Patriarch Job, and all the lesser nobility. True, on a deputation visiting him at the monastery of Novodievitchi with an offer of the crown, he affected at first refusal; but when the *Zemski Sobor* sitting in Moscow confirmed his selection, and the deputation returned to the monastery, Boris, in deference to the wishes of his sister, the clergy, and others, duly signified acceptance.

The supreme power thus definitely acquired, Boris so far moved ahead of his times as, looking to the West and discerning the source of its greatness and prosperity, to send Russian youths thither for scientific study. Thus, but for the obstacle of distrust of popular education which the clergy of his country displayed, he might have done in part what Possevino suggested to Ivan IV, and what Peter the Great accomplished outright.

But as it was, his Russian students seldom brought back from Germany, England, and Austria the true torch of Western enlightenment: and sometimes they did not even bring back themselves.

So, by way of amends, Boris invited foreign craftsmen, artisans, merchants, soldiers, and doctors to visit the country, and treated the last-named with especial indulgence as regards honours, privileges, and gifts, and the same with the English and German traders and with the foreign military adventurers. Indeed, the numbers of the latter increased until separate corps of their body could be formed.

Then, just as the year 1600 was about to open, there arose a rumour that the story of Prince Dimitri's death at Uglitch had been untrue. And so perturbed was Boris Godunov by the rumour that, believing it to have originated from the same *boyars* as had opposed his selection as Tsar, he set to work upon those *boyars'* wholesale banishment or execution. Then a famine broke out in the land, and a plague of acts of brigandage committed by absconding serfs: and finally, in 1604, there issued from Poland a man who declared himself to be the Tsarevitch Dimitri, and, though temporarily brought to a halt when he and his forces first entered Russia, soon gained the people's acclamations, mustered yet further supporters, and advanced anew upon Moscow. The outcome of this, if Boris had not suddenly died on 13 April, 1605, it is not easy to decide; but, in the event the people swore allegiance, not to the Pretender from Poland, but to Boris's son Fedor. A few months later Fedor, in his turn, died—he did so at the hands of assassins—and his widow, Xenia, went to become the Pretender's mistress, and the Godunov family became tragically extinct.

To retrace our steps a little: in 1604, when the Pretender was advancing upon Moscow, the story which he spread about in his justification was that he, Dimitri,

had escaped men sent to murder him at Uglitch, and was come to claim his ancestors' crown. Always, however, history has said that he was an impostor. Historians of the early years of the nineteenth century have averred that he was a monastic novice named Grigorii Otrepiev, and that a certain Russo-Lithuanian magnate named Prince Ostrozhki used him to further anti-Muscovite schemes of the prince's: and later historians have declared him to have been a man of Muscovite origin, and backed their statement with the item that, though he could speak Russian perfectly, he could express himself in the fashionable "Latin" of Polish society only with difficulty. Yet none of these historians could adduce anything positive concerning the Pretender's doings anterior to 1601, for the reason that it was only in that year that he first appeared, that he became a member of Prince Ostrozhki's household. And even so he probably entered that household merely by chance: though also it should not be forgotten that, as the Prince owned estates in Volhynia from which he drew an income almost equalling that even of the Polish king, whilst likewise he stood on intimate terms with many highly-placed personages in Warsaw, Moscow, Rome, and Constantinople, he was a magnate at least worth cultivating by one who, like the Pretender, had a great political adventure to forward. At all events, after a term in the prince's establishment and then a period of study in a Polish college, the Pretender visited a Prince Adam Vzychnevetski, and it was during that visit, some say, that in the course of an illness or, according to other accounts, in the course of a dispute, he first alleged that he was so lofty of birth, and had his story accepted by the prince and other Polish magnates—notably by the *Voevoda*, a Prince Mniszek of Sandomir, a man to whose daughter Marina the Pretender professed to have become greatly attached. At all events the Pretender went on to solicit sympathy

also of the Holy See, and actually became a Catholic for the purpose, and assured Rangoni, the Pope's Nuncio in Poland, that, let him but secure his footing in Russia, and the whole country should be brought over to Rome. More: he even contrived to interest Sigismund III himself in the scheme, and was accorded by that monarch a subsidy of forty thousand gold crowns, and permission to enlist Polish subjects. What Sigismund did *not* do, however, was adopt the cause officially. In return, moreover, he exacted a promise that, once the Pretender should get hold of Russia, he was to award Sigismund certain towns of that State, and especially Smolensk. That done, the Pretender returned to Sandomir, finally obtained the hand of Mniszek's daughter, endowed her with a "paper" grant of Novgorod and Pskov, and swore to let her retain her Catholic faith when she should have become Tsaritsa.

Then the Pretender started to march upon Moscow at the head of a band of Polish adventurers and two thousand Ukrainian Cossacks. This was in August 1604. Great help, meanwhile, did he derive from the Dimitri legend, and also from Boris's growing unpopularity. Indeed the legend proved as good as a third army in itself. Town after town surrendered without a blow, and he defeated fifty thousand Muscovites under Mstislavski, and General Basmanov went over to him with the whole of his command, and everywhere an irresistible flood of insurrection burst forth. Shuiski too tried to bar the Pretender's progress, but in vain. With the result that on 20 June, 1605, soon after that Boris Godunov's mother and son had been assassinated in the Kremlin in broad daylight, the Pretender entered Moscow in triumph.

A week later one of the Shuiskis was reported to him as having spoken to his detriment in a public place. At once the new Tsar had Shuiski put upon trial before a tribunal of ecclesiastics and laymen, and condemned

to death. However, then the Patriarch intervened, and procured commutation of the sentence to exile. And later Shuiski and his two brothers were granted a pardon outright, and allowed to return home. Then the Patriarch, in his turn, fell, and was replaced with the Greek Bishop of Riazan, the prelate who had performed the new Tsar's coronation. Nevertheless the latter did display certain traits of energy, of sagacity, and of will-power. True, his vanity led him actually to style himself "Cæsar," but at the same time he reformed the council of *boyars*, bettered the scale of official salaries, added to the peasantry's rights, ameliorated the lot of the serfs, encouraged Muscovite youths to improve themselves abroad, and contrived to balance himself between Catholicism and Orthodoxy—saw to it that on the one hand the Russian clergy had little to complain of, and that on the other the Papal Nuncio was given such promises as to Russia's forthcoming equipment with Catholic establishments as led that representative to send to Rome the most glowing reports. The ultimate cause of the Pretender's fall was *boyar* hatred, especially on the part of the Shuiskis, who never could pardon him his reforms, nor yet his partiality for foreigners. During the night of 16 May, 1606, the conspirators, whilst an anti-Polish demonstration was in progress, had the tocsin rung, and announced to the multitude which assembled that "Liakhs" were attacking the Tsar in his chambers: whereupon the people seized and beat every Pole who came to hand, and, under cover of this distraction, the conspirators made their way into the Kremlin, and surrounded the Tsar's apartments. Vainly the suddenly awakened Pretender sought refuge with the palace guard. The members of that guard felt too intimidated with the presence of highly influential *boyars* to intervene as he implored. And though long and strenuously he fought for his life, at length he was laid low with a

pistol-shot from a *boyar* named Valuev, and the people rushed in, and cried out that, after all, he had been a usurper, and, after burning the body, scattered the ashes to the winds.

Thus the throne of Moscow once more stood vacant: and upon that the Shuiskis and other leading *boyars* held a meeting in the Red Square, and proclaimed the eldest Shuiski, Vasilii, Tsar. Unfortunately the selection did not please either the people or such members of the minor *boyarstvo* as the Romanovs, the Bielskis, and the Saltykovs. True, Vasilii, at the ceremony of formal invitation to accept the crown, defended his fellows' selection of himself by citing his descent from Rurik, and his, therefore, relationship to the Tsars who had preceded him, whilst also he signed an Act limiting his power; but the popular ferment still continued, for it was a ferment born partly of the innate Slavic aversion to constitutional government, partly of the resentment of the minor *boyarstvo* at having been, as that section considered, slighted, and partly of the official class's belief that its privileges had been infringed.

So, to clear the air, Tsar Shuiski banished *en masse* the *boyars* who had supported the false Dimitri, and attempted to form a *bloc* of the remainder, and paid particular court to the Romanovs: but, in sum, the *boyarstvo's* internal dissensions, non-solidarity, and dislike of the new Tsar rendered his efforts vain. Then he strove to secure his position, and dissipate the still persistent Dimitri legend, by having the Tsarevitch's remains translated to Moscow; but, even so, the effort failed, and the very day on which the remains arrived saw Moscow half-flooded with pamphlets negatory of Dimitri's decease, and prophetic of his reappearance. Next, within a fortnight of Shuiski's accession, he had to suppress a popular rising in the streets of the capital. And, finally, there followed upon that rising's suppression a similar movement in the provinces, a movement of the

free peasantry against the *boyars* and larger landowners, of the minor *boyarstvos* against the Court, and of the serfs against their masters. This term of general social upheaval is known in history as the *Smutnoe Vremya*, the "Period of Troubles." The most prominent figure in the peasant insurrectionary movement was a freed serf named Bolotnikov, a sort of seventeenth-century Spartacus¹ whose socio-political programme consisted solely of murder and spoliation, and whose "slogan" ran: "Slay ye the rich and the noble! Seize ye their goods! Place yourselves in their room!" And so essentially popular was the programme, and so essentially Russian, as soon to be adopted by nearly half the country. Only after a long and arduous campaign did Shuiski and the frightened *boyars* and lesser gentry beat back Bolotnikov's hordes, and force Bolotnikov himself to take refuge in Tula.

Then a second Pretender made his appearance. Like his predecessor, he declared himself to be Dimitri *redivivus*. And, like his predecessor, again, his identity was unknown beyond that his origin had been Lithuanian. Some said that a Pope had begotten him; others that he was a converted Jew: but in any case he must have been a supporter of the late Pretender, seeing that he had knowledge of that claimant to an extent which would otherwise have been impossible. And, for the rest, he was a drunken, brutal, dissolute ruffian. In the first instance he gave himself out to be the Muscovite *boyar* Nagoi. Only when he was arrested at Starodub did he, instead, avow himself to be the Tsarevitch. Then, mustering a few recruits in Starodub, he set out for Moscow, and was joined at Orel by some Polish and Ukrainian and Lithuanian bands, and, during the spring of 1608, routed an army which Tsar Shuiski sent against him, and established himself in the Muscovite suburban

¹ A Roman slave who led a Southern Italian slave rebellion in 73 B.C.

settlement of Tuchino. Thence after a while he issued his programme. Which programme, like Bolotnikov's, lay in abolition of private property, and in nationalization of land. Only support which he received from Sigismund III prevented him from falling forthwith. In the matter, of course, Sigismund's idea was to grab the Muscovite crown for himself, or else to have it conferred upon his son Ladislaus. Another factor which helped to prolong the Pretender's run was his good fortune in laying hands upon Marina Mnisek as she was returning home with Poles named Lisovski and Sapieha, and in his successfully inducing her to give out, for an enhancement of his prestige, that he was her late husband. The ex-Metropolitan Philaret Romanov also he got hold of, promoted Patriarch, and converted into the central figure of a Court rapidly swelling with refugees from Moscow—with discontented officials, clergy in quest of preferment, and *boyars* whose dislike of Shuiski had been Sigismund's original incitement to his scheme of making the Muscovite crown his own.

As soon as the Bolotnikov rebellion had been liquidated Shuiski dispatched Michael, his nephew, to seek Sweden's aid against "the Brigand of Tuchino" in return for cession of Karelia, help against Poland, and relinquishment of Russia's claim to Livonia. These conditions Sweden accepted, and Michael returned to Moscow with a Scandinavian force of six thousand. This action Sigismund took for a pretext for a declaration of open war, and straightway laid siege to Smolensk, whilst "the Brigand of Tuchino" fled, disguised as a peasant, to Kaluga, and, being guilelessly accorded recognition there, and joined by Marina and a large Cossack contingent, sat down to await events. Unfortunately for him, a converted Tartar magnate named Urussov whom he had once had flogged in his presence remembered the insult: and on 11 December, 1610, when a hunting expedition was in progress, and the Pretender was, as

usual, in a state of semi-intoxication, this prince and his brothers ended the Pretender's life with their hunting-poniards.

Meanwhile Tsar Shuiski's commanders had committed such blunders in the Polish struggle that now Shuiski had no choice but to resign the throne. And this opened up the third phase of the Period of Troubles, with, for its first event, formation of yet another regency. And presently that regency fell because of the fact that distrust of its own ability to defend the State against its Cossack and serf assailants led it to permit Jolkevski, the Polish commander, to enter and occupy Moscow: whereupon, of course, Jolkevski at once claimed the Muscovite throne for his sovereign's son, Ladislaus. But though, for the moment, the Muscovite masses accepted the situation, and, on 27 August, 1610, duly swore "Tsar Ladislaus" allegiance, they instantly protested when Sigismund proffered himself, rather, as their ruler, despite that Sigismund had contrived first to suborn a portion of the *boyarstvo*. And next followed an appeal from Patriarch Hermogen that every Russian should join with his fellows in seeking to oust "the Polish traitors," and the appeal was quickly responded to by, amongst others, a Riazan *boyar* named Liapunov, who marched to Moscow with a force of militia, surrounded the Kremlin, and would speedily have overcome its garrison of three thousand Poles but for the fact that the Cossacks, peasants, and minor gentry who constituted his composite contingent started to quarrel amongst themselves. The ultimate result was that Liapunov was killed, the peasantry and minor gentry of his militia returned to Riazan, and the Cossack element remained free to loot and slay in Moscow, and proclaim a natural son of Marina Tsar. Meanwhile Sigismund took Smolensk, and the Swedes Novgorod. And, in short, the heritage of Moscow's Tsars of old seemed likely to become altogether a Polish possession.

But still there remained the stalwarts of the North. And, rising under a Prince Pozharski, and being fired to enthusiasm by a butcher named Minin, and making Nizhni Novgorod their point of muster, they captured successively Yaroslav, the Kitaigorod (China Town) quarter of Moscow, and the Kremlin. The sequel was a hasty return to Poland on Sigismund's part, and an issue of summonses to a *Zemski Sobor* on that of Pozharski.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST ROMANOVS

No sooner did the *Zemski Sobor* meet, early in 1613, than it became a scene of intrigue and factional strife. In it all the heads of aristocratic houses worked to procure their own nomination to the crown. Those with the best title to such nomination were *boyars* like the Shuiskis, the Vorotinskis, the Lvovs, the Massalskis, the Bariatinskis, and the Kropotkins, as *boyars* descending from Rurik; whilst opposed to them were such descendants of Guedemin (who originally was the founder of the old Duchy of Russo-Lithuania) as the Golitzins, the Khovanskis, and the Trubetskoi; and caballing in secret to the same end there was the family known as (after a remote ancestor) "Koshka's stock"—in other words, the family of Romanov.

The *Sobor*, then, found itself faced with a difficult task. As a first step, it weeded out all candidates who stood descended from alien forefathers, and all candidates who had figured prominently in recent events. And this process reduced the number of names to a few only. Ultimately, on 21 February, and for no better reason, seemingly, than that the name of Michael Romanov was one comparatively obscure, the latter was requested to sign a quasi-constitutional charter of limitation on the Polish model, and elected Tsar.

Michael then was seventeen. Owing to a dispute between his father, Fedor Nikititch Romanov, and Boris Godunov, Boris had, twelve years earlier, sent Fedor Nikititch into monastic seclusion as "Brother Philaret," and his wife, Michael's mother, into similar

seclusion as "Sister Martha," and Michael, the son, to live with an aunt of his, Princess Cherkasski. Then, as we know, Boris died, and the Second Pretender gave Philaret his liberty again and created him Patriarch, and released "Sister Martha" as well, and so united the family once more. Next, Philaret was, in 1618, sent on a mission to Poland, and there made prisoner. And now, after a term of wandering from place to place, "Sister Martha" and the son were resident at Kostroma.

Yet when the *Sobor's* delegates reached Kostroma for the purpose of escorting Michael back to Moscow in state both the mother and the son at first demurred. Said "Sister Martha" to the delegates: "My son never hath wished to rule a land of greatness and glory equal unto our own. And as yet he is not even of age. How, then, could he govern a State wherein oft-times those of high degree betray their lord?" However, these objections eventually were overcome, and the young Tsar crowned on 11 June. There is no evidence that he was required then to observe a regular constitution, but we know that scriptorily he had to acknowledge limitations upon his power.

At first his reign proved full of problems, for the coffers of the State were empty, and the rural districts infested with brigands and Cossacks, and the Polish and Swedish wars still in progress. As a first step towards replenishing the State's treasury the young Tsar and his advisers invited every one to contribute to it jewellery or other valuables; and as a means of clearing the country of malefactors the Government sent out punitive detachments, and in three years' time—though it cost much hard work—saw the task, for the time being, accomplished.

Unfortunately, affairs went less well on the frontiers of the empire. In the first place Sweden again and again checked Russia's troops under Prince Dimitri Trubetskoi. Not until 1617 did Sweden's desire to

retain Novgorod so far yield to her concern to bar Russia from the Baltic as to induce her to agree to Anglo-Dutch mediation between herself and her antagonist. Under the resultant treaty Sweden consented to restore to Russia Novgorod, Pskov, and Ladoga, and Russia, in exchange, was to cede Ivangorod and Kopori, and to render an indemnity of twenty million roubles, whilst the "honest brokers" in the case were accorded free Russian entry of their goods.

Poland, however, remained to be dealt with. And Russia dealt with her by, in 1618, after a splendid stand before Moscow on the part of Sheremetiev and his troops, negotiating a Russo-Polish truce that was to last for fourteen and a half years. One result of the truce was that Philaret, the father of the young Tsar, was enabled to return home from Poland. And, having been confirmed in his office as Patriarch by the Crown, he set to work to help his son in the administration of the State. Thus there came into being, practically, a dual tenure of the supreme power. Yet when, in the same year, a *Zemski Sobor* created Michael *Samoderzhets*, or Autocrat Sovereign—a title held by all Russia's Tsars thenceforth—Philaret did not receive a similar dignity.

Next, there recurred a scarcity of State revenue, and a decline of law and order. And thus the situation remained until the appointed end of the truce with Poland began to heave in sight. For curing the financial malady, the Government, this time, issued internal loans, and borrowed money of England, and farmed out the State's liquor rights, and used every endeavour to encourage the *vodka* habit amongst the people. But just when, in 1631, the Polish struggle was due to begin again, and all *boyars* and their sons had been notified to rejoin the army, and mercenaries had begun to be recruited, and a consignment of ten thousand muskets had been purchased, Sigismund's death took place, and

Michael and Philaret seized upon the resultant Polish turmoil over the election of Sigismund's successor to denounce what little still remained of the truce, and, appointing Michael Shein over their forces, resumed hostilities. Unfortunately Shein got shut up by Ladislaus in Smolensk and, though reinforcements long were waited for, they never were sent, and Shein and his eight thousand men had, in the end, to capitulate, to surrender everything, and to return to Moscow. Arraigned there for high treason, he suffered the penalty of the charge. The final outcome was that when, in 1634, another Polish truce was proposed no one in Russia objected, for the chief advocate of a Polish tussle *à outrance*, Philaret, had died a year earlier, and by this time Poland was so being plied with threats by Sweden and Turkey as well that she welcomed with profound relief the end of at all events the Russian portion of the conflict. At first she declared that if Ladislaus was definitely to relinquish his claim to the throne of Moscow Russia must pay a hundred thousand roubles, but in the end she expressed herself satisfied with twenty thousand, and cession of Chernigov and Smolensk. This bargain was concluded on 4 June, 1634.

Then, thus enabled to revert to home affairs, Michael took the Church in hand, and both in that and the domestic sphere cut a by no means poor figure, for all his illiteracy, and for all that he had to aid him, firstly, the fact that he was the son of his father, and, secondly, the fact that he had for backing a National Assembly able equally to frame legislation and to enforce that legislation's observance. In all this we see the truly paradoxical phenomenon of a quasi-theocratic State being governed on the lines of a parliamentary one.

Michael's first wife, Maria Dolgoruki, died when he had been married to her four months. Rumours of the day said that poison had been the cause. And

in 1624 he took to himself Eudoxia, daughter of one Strieshnev, a small landowner, and begat of her a son and three daughters. A dropsical seizure carried him off on 13 August, 1645.

The son in question, Alexis, then acceded. Like his father, he was an elected Tsar, a Tsar chosen by a National Assembly: but he differed from his father in acceding as already *Samoderzhetz*, or autocrat sovereign, and therefore in not being called upon to sign a limitation of his rights as ruler, but only to undertake periodically to convene a *Zemski Sobor*. At the time he was sixteen, and had been educated by an exceptionally able, gifted man named Boris Morozov, who in his zeal for his charge's mental equipment to a point surpassing that of previous Tsarevitches, or, for that matter, of the average *boyar's* son, had all Germany ransacked for such toys, musical instruments, illustrated manuscripts, maps, and the rest as he thought might prove suitable. For by this time Muscovy had emerged from her "splendid isolation," and was constantly increasing her Western ties, and, even as regards her clergy, ceasing to oppose the slow, sure permeation of her society with the West's science, literature, and thought. In fact, not Peter the Great, but earlier rulers, it was who first put Russia to school. Merely, in that respect, Peter carried on and completed what his forerunners had begun. He was not the first introducer even of Western dress. He who first walked the streets of Moscow in German and French garb was Alexis—even though he did so, in the first instance, for sport only, as a jest.

As Alexis, at the time of his accession, was too little versed in men and affairs to govern a huge and growing empire unaided, we may reasonably ascribe what was then accomplished to his mentor, Morozov. But of the same circumstance, that at this period the young Tsar always had some one to help and advise him, there may have come the mental and physical lethargy which was

destined to grow rather than to diminish. Also, after his marriage with Maria Miloslavski (when, incidentally, he persuaded his tutor to marry Maria's sister), Alexis fell so much under the influence of his new relatives as to put them in a position to exploit his weakness and amiability towards arousing popular unrest. Behind that unrest there may have lurked also, of course, discontent with a land tax, with Alexis's partiality for foreign visitors and foreign dress, with Morozov's privileged status, and the like; but in any case the kinsfolk of the young Tsaritsa were the persons who actually stirred the unrest to activity, and brought it about that on 25 May, 1648, the cup of the people's dissatisfaction finally overflowed in the form of an outcry for Morozov's head, of devastation of his house, and of murders of Plektcheiev (a Crown official) and the *boyar* council's secretary. As it happened Alexis had received warning in time, and at least was able to smuggle Morozov out of Moscow, and dispatch him to the Kirilov Monastery. And when that had been done he, to appease the mob, surrendered to its mercies another Crown official named Trakhaniotov, and proclaimed an annulment of the land tax.

During Morozov's absence the Tsar formed a close attachment to Nikon, Metropolitan of Novgorod, summoned him to Moscow, and in 1652 created him both Patriarch and *Velikii Gosudar*, or "Great Lord." Nikon, a man of far more forceful character than the Tsar, then gained a commanding influence in State affairs, and was enabled to carry out ecclesiastical reforms which his predecessors had never ventured upon. "The priesthood always should come before even the Sovereign Power," was a favourite saying of his. And often would he compare the authority of the Church to the light of the sun, and the authority of the State to that of a star. As for the honours and favours with which the Tsar endowed him, he accepted them merely

as a patriarchal due. "Let us not bow down before the Tsar because of gifts," he wrote in one instance. "This is the less needful in that what the Tsar now giveth he will be repaid an hundredfold in Heaven, so that he do gain all Paradise." But at last the self-complacency and ingratitude displayed by Nikon became such that even the sovereign took offence, and when the enemies of the Patriarch denounced him as a knave and an intriguer, arraigned him before the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch and a commission of metropolitans, and, on this tribunal adjudging the accused unworthy of his office, banished him to a remote monastery.

Nevertheless Nikon, the son of a peasant, the village priest who rose to be Patriarch, was, for all his pride, a great social figure, a great scholar, and a great servant of his contemporaries. He it was who intervened to save Arsenius the Greek¹ from internment for life in the Solovetski Monastery, and refuted the charge that Arsenius had inculcated false doctrine when lecturing on Greek and Latin to his Muscovite pupils. And Nikon it was who gave many a monastery a splendid library, and imported from abroad Greek manuscript texts of Æschylus, Thucydides, Demosthenes, Plutarch, Hesiod, and Homer. And Nikon it was who, above all, carried out a revision of the Scriptures according to those Scriptures' Greek originals. Upon this last task his predecessor, the Patriarch Josephus, had at least begun tentatively; but Nikon it was who finally brought it to completion. Unfortunately much of the necessary literary clarification he entrusted to grammarians of Hellas, and, to theologians of Kiev; and the fact offending the Archpriest Abbakum and the Ultra-Nationalist Party, who cared little for Byzantine Orthodoxy and

¹ An Orthodox convert from Catholicism who, in 1649, was made head of a Greco-Latin "college" attached to the Chudovoi Monastery.

Kievan ecclesiasticism, there resulted a cleavage or schism (*raskol*) in which the *Raskolniks*, or "Old Believers," ranged themselves on the one side, and the "New Believers" on the other.

In 1653 the Cossacks of the Ukraine petitioned "the Tsar of the East," as they called the Muscovite ruler, to accord them help against the prevalent bands of Polish raiders, and on 1 October of that year a *Zemski Sobor* acceded to the request, and declared war against Poland, and arranged for the Tsar in person to take command of the Russian forces. In the following spring Alexis captured successively Smolensk, Vilna, Kovno, and Grodno, and, as a result of these successes, remembered the old Muscovite idea of establishing Russia permanently upon the Baltic's eastern littoral, and went on to capture also Dunaburg and Kokenhausen, and then to besiege Riga. Yet no sooner was Charles X of Sweden reported to be going to take a hand in the campaign, and to invade Livonia, than Alexis raised the siege of Riga, fell back upon Polotsk, and in 1661 signed at Cardis a treaty surrendering the whole of Russia's gains.

The next event of the reign was that in the south-eastern portion of the country there made his appearance a Cossack who, Stenka Razin by name, raised a large band of rebels, ascended the Don in flat-bottomed boats, pillaged settlements and estates right and left *en route*, and finally took up his position in a stronghold where the Don, for a certain distance, approaches the Volga. This he did because the Volgan region was (as it had been for centuries) the supremely favourable field for operations of brigandage. Also, Stenka would not have been a typical Russian footpad if he had not added to that rôle the rôle likewise of a legislator for and a champion of the people. And so long did he remain immune, and with such terror did he imbue the authorities, that he gained adherents far and wide, and his name came to be in every mouth.

Thoroughly did he exemplify the national dislike of restraint. He did so both in his strange, morbid species of mysticism, in his passion for masques and shows and plays, in his sickly itch for "soul-gladdening" murder, theft, and rape, and in his "repentings" before icons and relics. Easily he captured Astrakhan and Tsaritsin. But though all the while he kept saying: "Not to chastise the *boyars*, or to seize their superfluity of riches, am I come. I am come to give unto the poor one-half of my own," and also: "It is not my desire to become Tsar, but only to dwell among the people," he took good care, all the time, to inflame the masses, and once organized an absurd spectacle in which two barges, the one draped in black and the other one in red, came sailing down the Volga, and were reported to the credulous onlookers by Stenka's agents to have on board them "the Tsarevitch Alexis, the Heir to Russia's throne," and "the Patriarch Nikon himself," come to bless and to salute "our leader Stepan Timofeivitch." In 1671, however, there came the day of reckoning. Twice routed near Smolensk, and forced to fall back before Prince Yurii Bariatinski, Stenka was on 14 April seized in his stronghold by some of his own Cossacks, bound hand and foot, and, with his brother Frolka, surrendered to the authorities, who hanged the rank and file of his companions on the spot, removed the two brothers to Moscow, beheaded Stenka, and sent Frolka into exile.

On Alexis's death on 30 January, 1676, the throne passed to Fedor, his eldest son by his first wife. Fedor, then fifteen, was, despite an education by the noted scholar-poet Simeon Polotski, a lad but of weak and unstable character, and soon yielded to the Miloslavski family's influence, and could do nothing to prevent their persecution of his stepmother and brother.¹ True,

¹ Natalia, Tsar Alexis's widow, and her son Peter, afterwards Peter the Great.

the Miloslavskis' influence waned for a while when he married Agatha Gruchetskaia, but that did not last long. And when Fedor died after a six-years' reign Russia once more found herself confronted with the ever-recurring dynastic problem.

The next heir to the throne was Fedor's younger brother Ivan, but unfortunately Ivan equalled Fedor in mental and physical debility, and the Narishkin faction (now emerged from the retirement enforced by the Miloslavski domination) claimed, not without reason, that the proper successor to Fedor was Natalia's son and Ivan's half-brother, young Peter. And eventually a *Zemski Sobor* acceded to the claim, and made Peter a formal offer of the crown. But Sophia Romanov, the cleverest of the Romanov family, was not to be suppressed in this way; and suddenly, whilst her late brother Fedor's obsequies were being held, she cried, weeping, to the people: "Hear ye, all! Our brother Fedor now is lying dead of poison given him by an enemy hand, yet—and pity us, good people, pity us his orphaned kindred—our brother Ivan, who rightfully should have been proclaimed Tsar, hath not been so proclaimed!—Howbeit, if we, his kindred, have offended you and the *boyars*, let us depart hence. Gladly will we go and dwell with princes who in very truth are Christian." And so forth. This passionate appeal was not without its effect. And that effect emboldened Sophia and her faction to proceed a step farther. On 15 May, just when the *boyars* were assembling for a conference in the Kremlin, there arose a rumour that one of the Narishkin family had just murdered young Ivan by strangling him; and upon that the *strieltzi* rushed to the Kremlin as though in response to a concerted signal, and dashed up the grand staircase of the palace apartments with curses upon everyone of the name of Narishkin, and ejected the *boyars*, and temporarily subsided only when the Patriarch appeared at

the head of the staircase, and showed them Natalia holding young Ivan by the one hand, and young Peter by the other. Then again the *strieltsi* flung out—they declared young Ivan not to be Ivan at all, again reviled the Narishkins, demanded that Peter should hand back the crown to his brother, rushed up the staircase a second time, hurled Michael Dolgoruki thence on to comrades' pikes below, and sent Natalia and the two boys fleeing back into the palace. Then they issued into the streets, rioted right and left, and finally, on encountering and capturing Daniel, the physician who was alleged to have been Fedor's poisoner, dragged him to the Kremlin, and there, despite protests from the princesses and the widowed Tsaritsa (who again and again declared herself personally to have pre-tasted every draught of medicine given to the dead monarch), subjected their captive to tortures of the most terrible sort, and ended by flinging him headlong from a tower. Then again they demanded that Ivan should replace Peter on the throne.

All this set the *boyar* council face to face with a dilemma. The council, in the first place, felt that it could not go back upon the decision of the recent *Zemski Sobor*. And, in the second place, the council shrank, naturally enough, from risking a popular outbreak exceeding even that of the *strieltsi*. And in the third place, the council hesitated to convoke the *Zemski Sobor* again, and to set it to debate the subject on hand amid an atmosphere of universal unrest. But at last someone proposed adoption of the Byzantine precedent of electing two Tsars simultaneously, and the proposal was put to the vote, unanimously accepted, and later confirmed by the necessary *Zemski Sobor*. Hence jointly Ivan and Peter became occupants of the Russian throne.

The coronation of the two new Tsars took place in the Cathedral of the Assumption on 25 June, 1682. After which both of them were placed under the care

of the Princess Sophia as regent. Sophia, a very active and acute personage, had, like her brother Fedor, been educated by Simeon Polotski, and, though only twenty-five years old, already possessed an excellent knowledge of State affairs. Unfortunately she cherished an intense and implacable enmity against her stepmother, against the Narishkin family in general, and against the *Raskolniks*, the anti-Nikonian Dissenters. Hence she made her first State act a campaign against the latter, and the more so as these for the most part uncompromising fanatics had always been a source of trouble and perplexity to the Government and the official Church. The degree of enlightenment contained in that Church's own religious attitude may be gauged from the following. In 1650 Tsar Alexis bade the Bishop of Tver arrange an annual festival to a Saint Anna of Kashin¹ who died in 1337. And for the next seventeen years the festival was observed in regular course. Then all at once the Patriarch Joachim forbade its further observance. His reason was that, on the saint's tomb being opened, her right hand had been found to be resting on her breast as though making a benediction, not with the three fingers prescribed of Nikon, but with two only.

Sophia ordered all meeting-houses of Old Believers to be fired (in passing, such was these sectarians' love of theological discussions as to cause many dissensions in their midst, and to lead to formation of sects distinguished more for a sort of Shamanism, or even of orgiastic sadism, than for Christianity) and their unions to be broken up, and their members, "if still they should persist in error," to be flogged, or even immolated. Next Sophia saw to the *strieltsi*, and showed them that at least she meant to be their master, and executed their late commandant, Prince Khovanski, yet also accorded them presents, licensed them to participate in

¹ In January 1930 her shrine was opened and desecrated by orders of the Soviet Government.

trade and commerce (they had enjoyed this privilege also in Alexis' time), dowered them with civil rights in full, and gave such of them as were married leave to live out of barracks. Lastly, turning her attention to Natalia, her stepmother, she confined that lady to residence in the suburban village of Preobrazhenskoe, and left young Peter (who, however, seemed to care nothing for State affairs) to divert himself as best he could with military exercises of a mimic order, and the erection and demolition of forts built of sand, and the construction of boats.

In 1687 Russia perforce became drawn into membership of an anti-Turkish coalition. And in this we see Russia gain her first experience of political action in Western company. The cause was that Poland was drawn by heavy reverses at the hands of the Turks to offer Russia, in return for Russian help additional to German and Venetian, a restoration of Smolensk, Kiev, and the cis-Dnieperian region. Whereupon a Russian force under Prince Vasilii Golitzin duly marched against one of Turkey's allies, the Crimean khan. Unfortunately the Ukrainian Cossacks cherished such enmity alike against Poland and against her partners that they fired the grass of the steppes, and the Russians had no choice but to return home again. And though a second attempt was made two years later, it too failed, whilst, as at the same period Russia found herself compelled to surrender the region of the Amur to China, many of Moscow's *boyars* detached themselves from Sophia's side, and she became generally unpopular. This she attributed to machinations on the part of Natalia and Peter, and not to her advisers' policy; and the belief led her, in 1689, to conceive the truly diabolical scheme of having Natalia interned and Peter assassinated, and actually to entrust practical arrangements to that end to the *strieltsi's* commandant, Shaklovitski. Fortunately Peter was warned in time, and, leaving

Preobrazhenskoe during the night of 8 August, fled to the Troitski Monastery, and on the following day was joined there by his mother and some friendly *boyars* and foreign mercenaries under a German named Sommer and a Scotchman named Gordon. Only then did Sophia realize what a risky venture she had attempted. At once she sent to the monastery to beg Peter's attendance upon her in Moscow, but he refused her request, and repeated the refusal when next the Patriarch Joachim was sent, and again repeated it (after inducing Joachim—who had no love for Sophia—to stay where he was) even when Sophia herself arrived. Rather, he demanded the heads of Shaklovitski and all his colleagues, and Sophia, after similarly failing to move both the *strieltsi* and young Ivan, had at last to surrender, and was dispatched to the convent of Novodievitchi, whilst Vasilii Golitzin was exiled, and the rest of the conspirators executed. Thenceforth Peter ruled in earnest.

CHAPTER VIII

PETER THE GREAT

PETER had his first real encounter with his fellows when, on 15 May, 1682, the *strieltsi* made their demonstration in favour of his brother, and he watched the tumult from the steps leading to the palace of the Kremlin. The scene on that occasion is said to have made upon him no impression whatever, but more probably he remained motionless because he was paralysed with terror. At all events that was when there began to show itself the nervous affection which ever afterwards caused his features constantly to twitch, his right arm to keep making a backward jerk when he was walking, and his head sometimes to relapse sideways. Of the same cause probably came his lifelong detestation of the *strieltsi*.

Peter was no infant prodigy. Even when he was eleven years old he could read and write only with difficulty. And to the end of his life orthography and grammar were to him *bêtes noires*, and the most elementary of mathematics a stumbling-block. The origin of this conceivably was long seclusion at Preobrazhenskoe, and the company only of a mother whom Prince Kudashev, a relative of hers, states to have been limited of intellect. And another factor in the matter may have been his irregular, aimless, undisciplined existence there. At Preobrazhenskoe everyone and everything had to give way to his whim of the moment. And as his temperament inclined him rather to outdoor, demonstrative pursuits than to sedentary, reticent interests, he surrounded himself with young men who, ranging from

aristocrats to artisans, helped him in the first instance in his boyish sports, and then went to form his comrades-in-arms in his mimic military operations. Above all things was Peter military. And above all things, at that, was he *practically* military, did he find most appeal to him such branches of the warlike art as were connected with applied science, pyrotechnics, fortification, mechanics, and naval construction. For the same reason the proletarian element took the lead amongst his companions. True, his sister Sophia used to refer to his two "toy" corps, corps named after, respectively, the suburban village of Preobrazhenskoe and the suburban village of Semenovno, as "bands of rascallions"; but, for all that, the corps had officers paid from Government funds, and engaged in exercises which not infrequently entailed lists of real killed and wounded. In intervals between these exercises Peter employed himself with boat-building. Thus a diversion begun on a small inland lake gave Russia, at last, an ocean-going fleet.

Then, though he was not yet come of age, was not yet turned eighteen, his mother bethought her of finding him a wife. Her motive in this was political, not domestic, and came of the fact that though Sophia, as regent, had already done the same in connection with Peter's brother Ivan, only daughters had resulted from the union. Natalia's choice fell eventually, not upon an aristocratic maiden, but upon one Eudoxia Lopukhina, a daughter of the petty gentry. And Peter was married to Eudoxia on 27 January, 1689. One result was immediate inundation of the Court with a flood of boorish relatives of the bride, and, consequently, trouble and enmity in Court circles which at last forced Natalia to intervene with the requisite hint to her daughter-in-law. As for Peter, the time which he spent with Eudoxia cannot have amounted to, in all, twelve months. His whole craving was for movement, observation, investigation, and an untrammelled existence.

When nineteen Peter was already a man, and tall,¹ handsome, "as swarthy as though born in Africa, strong likewise, and having a sort of a grand air, yet also a faulty carriage." His self-control, however, did not equal his ardent temperament. Quenchless was his taste for dissipation and "good company." And though not a despot of the Asiatic type, not a devotee of bloodshed for its own sake, he was callous, uncouth, sensual, lacking in sensibility, gross, and too free of fist. At the same time, he possessed what few of his predecessors had possessed, and what few of his successors ever came to possess. That is to say, he possessed a strong sense of duty, a constant remembrance that he must work for his State. Unfortunately neither his energy nor his flair for enterprise was matched by his personal valour. So little, indeed, was he a paladin as on two separate occasions during his early manhood to play the coward. The first occasion was when he fled by night from Preobrazhenskoe to the Troitski Monastery. And the second occasion was when, in 1700, the unexpected news of Charles XII's imminent approach to the Narva sent him fleeing homeward. Contemptuously then said the Saxon general, Hallard: "No soldier at least is he!" For the same reason may it have been that even when he had reached the age of nineteen, and worsted his sister Sophia, and chastised and dispersed her adherents, and reduced the *strieltsi* to submission, and acquired his brother Ivan's rights of rule, he still hesitated to assume the reins of government, he still shrank from giving up his hitherto careless and irregular mode of life. Possibly, too, his then hesitation was aggravated by the fact that recently he had struck up a close friendship with François Lefort, an immigrant of Scottish-Swiss origin. All foreign residents in Russia lived together, at that period, in what was known as the *Niemetskaia Sloboda*, or German Suburb, of Moscow.

¹ Two *arshins*—nearly seven feet.

And amongst them there were English, Scotch, French, Dutch, and German nationals, and they were organized like a single great household. Peter particularly loved *inozemtsi*, aliens. Whether this came of a natural sympathy for such people, or whether it came of the undoubted fact that such people could do much to satisfy his primitive and all-prevailing curiosity, it would be hard to say. Lefort originally had served in the Swiss Guard of France, but, in 1674, been forced to leave the country in consequence of a duel, and gone to the Netherlands, and thence, after earning distinction during the sieges of Grave and Audenoorde, to Russia, where he had participated in the Crimean attempts of 1687 and 1689, and then married a rich widow of Russo-German birth, and gained for a patron the powerful Prince Vasiliï Golitzin. True, he was not actually a man of culture, but he possessed sufficient knowledge of the world to be very useful to Peter, and also had tact in abundance, and, like Peter, appreciated wine, woman, and song. Hence it was at Lefort's residence in the German Suburb (and likewise at General Patrick Gordon's) that Peter most carried out his merry-makings, and maintained drinking bouts for days and nights at a time, and, though out-drinking everyone else, himself remained constantly in mental and physical health. The same with his innumerable amours. Amongst the objects of those amours there were a certain Anna Mons whose favours he shared with Lefort, and for whose sake he even at one time thought of divorcing Eudoxia, and a certain Helena Fadenrecht. No woman was too plain for him. Yet to that we may reasonably add the surmise that the motive concerned may have been no more than an impulse of good nature, as when at a banquet he suddenly said to a woman of indifferent charms named Barba Arseniev: "Poor Barba of mine, I take it that never yet hast thou been complimented by a man. Yet, as

strange doings delight me, and I would not have thee go to thy grave without ever having known love, now will I——” And throwing her on to a couch he then and there, before the whole company, suited action to word. Well, if we remember the manners of the age the story at least is not improbable.

Yet any inference that these debaucheries ever led Peter to forget the State and his tasks of reform would be an error. For never did he leave wasted hours not made up for. Moreover, he knew always how to put even the most vicious, the most debased, associate to the best possible use. Thus, though Sheremetiev it was who put into actual execution the battle plans which ultimately procured Charles XII's defeat, it was the Scotchman Ogilvy who originally framed those plans. In this connection a notable point is the fact that invariably the Russian assistants who served him longest were members of such old and aristocratic families as the Tolstois, the Kurakins, the Tatistchevs, the Sheremetievs, and the Apraxins.

When precisely another favourite of Peter's, Alexander Menshikov, was born we do not know. We know merely that he and Peter were approximately contemporaries. Beginning as a private in Peter's Preobrazhenski Corps, and passing thence into the service of Lefort, Menshikov, in 1697, reverted to employment under Peter, and accompanied him both on his Azov campaign and on his foreign tours. Also, he helped Peter in his technical activities and in his suppression of the *strieltsi* outbreak of 1697. Nay, he even allowed Peter personally to cut off his beard! The sovereign's attachment to the subject was rendered closer still by the latter's display of skill and valour in the Livonian campaign. And when the field of war with Sweden passed to Lithuania Menshikov was made commander-in-chief of the cavalry of Ogilvy's army, and then, on his helping utterly to rout Mardeveld and his Swedes on 18 October, 1706, a

"Prince of the Holy Empire" as well, and possessor of some huge estates. Lastly his important part in the battle of Poltava landed him upon the ultimate rung of all, and, already "Duke of Ijora," he became, finally, "Marshal of the Empire." Yet he was venal and avaricious to the core, and, on Peter, in 1711, discovering this to be so, merely replied: "Yea, I have stolen as thou sayest, and even I myself could not say how much I have stolen as unto mine own ends I did use my authority from thee. Yet have I only done in large what others do in little. Thou oughtest long since to have estopped my erring. Remember what once Yaguzhinski¹ did say unto thee. Remember his words when once thou didst threaten thenceforth to hang takers of bribes. Said he: 'Your Majesty, desirest thou to be left without a single subject?'" Well, Peter valued Menshikov too much to break with him then. Moreover, he had a feeling that he himself had been partly at fault through excessive conferment of authority. So on that occasion the sponge was passed over the misdoings of "*mein Herzenskind*."² And when Menshikov again was discovered in financial speculation, and this time seemed really to be confronted with Siberia, the moment chanced immediately to precede Peter's last illness and death, and Menshikov proceeded to added promotion rather than to degradation, since Catherine, Peter's successor and Russia's first empress, had once been his paramour.

Catherine's initial appearance of all upon the historical stage was made during the July of 1702. At the time hostilities with Sweden were still in progress, and General Sheremetiev was posted before the small Livonian town of Marienburg, and on the point of delivering an assault upon the place, when an orderly announced to him that some civilian refugees thence

¹ A cobbler who rose to be Procurator-General of the Senate.

² "My heart's child."

were craving passage through the Russian lines. And when the general commanded the refugees' attendance they turned out to be a certain Lutheran pastor named Gluck, his wife and family, and a hale and hearty servant-girl of about twenty. The pastor, when questioned, offered to serve as interpreter to the forces, but on being found to possess a knowledge of languages that was almost polyglottic was forwarded to Moscow¹: as also was his family. But there remained the servant-girl. What was to be done with her? It appeared that, the daughter of a Livonian peasant, of the name of Skavronski, now dead, she had served for a while as the Gluck family's factotum, and then been taken into the family itself, and taught at least the Catechism, some grammar, and sufficient of the scriptory art to be able to sign her own name. The upshot was that Sheremetiev put her "on the strength" and she became the joy of the officers' mess for her wit and verve, turned Orthodox, changed her name to Catherine (hitherto it had been Martha), and rose from acting as mistress to a subaltern to acting in a like capacity to the general, and then, when the general tired of her, to doing the same thing jointly by Peter and Menshikov. For his part, Peter found this Gretchen of Livonia wholly to his taste: he made her his companion on all his campaigns, converted her into his consort-in-law on 19 February, 1712, legitimized his daughters by her (Anna and Elizabeth), and, lastly, in 1723, crowned her at Moscow with his own hand, and invested her with the orb, the emblem of sovereignty, but kept to himself the sceptre, the emblem of power. Such a crowning of a woman had never before been known in Russia, and the people thought it the more important because ever

¹ To serve, according to the historian Kluchevsky, in the *Prikay Inostrannikh Del*, or Office for Foreign Affairs, which was badly in need of translators. With that, he was allowed to establish a private school which earned notoriety for its all-round curriculum.

since the death of the Tsarevitch Alexis in the year 1719¹ there had been general speculation as to whom Peter would make his heir, and now Catherine's coronation seemed to settle the point.

Never did Peter lose sight of the fact that Russia needed before all things else a stretch of sea that should be free of ice. Hitherto Russia's rulers had striven towards that end solely in the Livonian quarter, but now, as circumstances rendered further efforts there inadvisable, Peter, in 1696, turned to the Caspian and the south-east, and sought in particular to get hold of the Gulf of Azov, as a means of passage to the Black Sea itself. Yet though Azov ultimately was captured, it was captured at such a cost that when Peter returned home he told his *boyars* that that hollow victory could be made good only by institution of national contributions towards a permanent fleet. But when that fleet at last came into being it proved faulty as regards real military value and high-seas command, and presently had to be dismantled.

Then, as an alternative means towards resumption of the war with Turkey, Peter commissioned a "Grand Embassy" for negotiation of, in Europe, an anti-Turkish alliance of Russia and certain other Christian States. As head of the mission he nominated Lefort, and he himself was to accompany the party as merely "Volunteer Member of Embassy Peter Mikhailov." For he desired to see without being seen, and to study without having his investigations broken in upon.

Leaving Moscow on 9 May, 1697, the Embassy first halted at Riga—where the governor so took *au pied de la lettre* the anonymity of his sovereign that he would not allow him even to enter the citadel. For amends, however, the Embassy was cordially welcomed at Mitau by the Elector of Brandenburg, and then, by way of Colberg, Lubeck, and Hamburg, reached Saardam,

¹ This incident will be related later.

a town particularly recommended for study of the shipwright's craft by a Dutch resident of Moscow. There, whilst the rest of the Mission went elsewhere for purchase of munitions and engagement of artisans, Peter dwelt for eight days—and for eight days truly astounded the townsfolk with his remarkable bearing and extravagant doings. Next, all having reassembled at Amsterdam, all crossed to England, where for four months Peter did shipwright's work on a Deptford wharf, and his companions made further purchases of armament, and further engagement of technical, naval, and military experts. Amongst the naval men there was, in particular, a master mariner named Perry, and on the Continent already there had been secured a Dutch captain named Kreys, a Portuguese Jew named Devier, and one Ostermann who, the son of a German pastor, ranked, on the strength of two years' study at Jena, as a fully equipped university scholar. But, unfortunately, the embassy failed to achieve its supreme purpose of organizing an anti-Turkish alliance. No one then was very eager either to fight Turkey or to help Russia to fight her. Rather, everyone was making preparations for a tussle over the Spanish Succession question. These facts were explained to that sworn foe to etiquette, Peter, at, of all places in the world, the Court of Vienna!

Peter had meant next to go to Venice, in order, not, be it explained, to view the Palace of the Doges, or the Campanile, or Venice's Carpaccios and Bellinis, but to inspect a new naval-constructional process: but as things turned out he had not yet left the Austrian capital when word reached him that the *strieltsi* were in revolt again, and he must hurry home at best speed. And with no stop *en route* save to meet Augustus II at Rawa (and incidentally make up his mind that the scheme of an anti-Turkish coalition had better be shelved in favour of a further attempt upon the Baltic), he reached Moscow on 25 August, 1697, and spent the next day in divesting

his principal home officials of their beards, and in forcing French raiment upon their limbs, and the next day and many thereafter in dealing with the *strieltsi*. Already a large number of the corps had been either imprisoned or executed by Shein and Gordon, but Peter started fresh sets of judicial proceedings, and at the same time sought to find out how far Sophia and any accomplices of hers had played a part in the affair. Clearly the idea of the *strieltsi* had been to massacre the *boyars* and seize the capital; but he failed to obtain any reliable evidence as to whether, that done, Sophia had meant to ascend the throne. None the less, he made her take the veil as "Sister Suzanna," and then left a few hanged *strieltsi* dangling from the window-frame of her cell. Indeed, in its every detail Peter's action with regard to the affair was almost inhumanly brutal. It seemed as though this time he meant to submerge the objects of his lifelong hatred in a perfect sea of blood. And even when, in accordance with ancient custom, the Patriarch Adrian arrived to intercede for the condemned men Peter burst forth: "Wherefore art thou come hither? Begone! Begone! Replace that icon in the place whence thou didst take it, and meddle no more with that which concerneth thee not." The slaughter continued uninterruptedly for five months. In all over a thousand *strieltsi* were either hanged or beheaded, and then left to lie without burial the winter through.

On 20 December, 1699, Peter introduced by *ukaz* a new system of time-reckoning,¹ and so severed at a stroke ancient Muscovy from the New Russia. And next came struggles again with Sweden. A month earlier Peter and Augustus of Poland had secretly concluded an agreement whereby, on peace being made with Turkey, Russia was to invade Sweden's Finnish,

¹ The Russians now ceased to reckon time from the Creation of the World, and to begin the year with September.

Karelian, and Ingvian territories: but as, in the event, peace with Turkey was not attained until the following August, Peter could only then dispatch towards Finland forty thousand men of his, in the meantime, reorganized army. Then suddenly he diverted the men to Narva—his idea being that thereby he could better hold Livonia and Esthonia in check: but, owing to the delay which this caused, the Swedish king was enabled, after beating the Danes, to land upon the Esthonian coast, and start for Narva hotfoot. Peter heard of this in the middle of the night of 17 November, and at once deputed his command to Prince de Cruys, an entirely new and untried general, and started upon flight homeward. Naturally such a defection in the enemy's very face earned speedy retribution: Charles's eight thousand Swedes quickly beat their five times more numerous opponents, and the only thing that saved those opponents from annihilation outright was the fact that Charles scorned to follow up such a victory.¹

However, Peter at least took the lesson to heart. Throwing aside his private debaucheries, he once more applied himself to create a modern army and fleet, and by the year 1701 had, through successive levies, become able to re-take the field with army corps under, respectively, Sheremetiev and Repnin. And so there ensued a further seven-years' period of warfare with the Swedes. Sometimes Peter fought them single-handed, and sometimes he fought them with Poland by his side. And almost always he did so on foreign soil. Until at last, rashly enough, Charles took it into his head to invade the Ukraine. He did so on the strength of assurances from Mazeppa, the chief *ataman* of the Cossacks, that thereupon the whole region would rise against the

¹ According to Kluchevsky, there was a medal struck at the time. On it Peter, with handkerchief to streaming eyes, and sword cast away, is seen in full flight. Over him stand the words: "Peter went forth, and wept bitterly."

Russians, and also because he, Charles, himself believed that he would receive help from the Turks and King Stanislaus Leszczyński—the more so as it was Charles who had set Stanislaus upon the throne of Poland after procuring the Diet's deposition of Augustus II, Russia's ally: but almost the whole of this looked-for help failed to materialize when the moment came—Mazeppa succeeded in mustering only five thousand of his Cossacks, and the Turks temporized, and Stanislaus remained held in check by General Holtz and an *ataman* named Siniavski who had been one of the deposed Augustus's friends. Hence the Swedes had to spend the whole of that winter, the winter of 1708–9, in the Ukraine, and in inactivity. Then spring arrived, and the Swedes decided that, in consequence of the winter's enormous drainage upon their numbers through famine, sickness, and cold, they must at all costs end the situation. So they laid siege to Poltava. And two months later the Russians crushed them utterly, and Charles himself would have been either killed or captured had he not taken to flight, and therein been helped through the inexplicable dallying of Menskihov, who ought to have pursued the Swedes at once instead of wasting another twenty-four hours. If Menshikov had done that, he would have caught Charles beyond a doubt. But as it was he overtook the Swedes at the Dnieper only when Charles had had time to cross to the farther bank.

One result of the victory was to force the powers of the West to pay their Russian neighbour more respect than formerly. Upon Poltava, too, there followed capture of, successively, Riga, Pernaü, Dunamünde, and Vyborg. Yet the end of the struggle was not yet: Charles and Peter became mutually reconciled only after total destruction of the Swede's main fleet off Hango in 1714, and an occupation of most of Finland. And even then the consequent peace negotiations suffered sudden interruption because of the death of

Charles whilst besieging the town of Frederickshald in Norway.¹ The interruption lasted for five years, and might have lasted longer still if Peter had not induced Charles's successor, his sister Ulrica Eleanor,² to resume the negotiations by sending a squadron to occupy the Aland Isles, and raiding Sweden's eastern seaboard, and, finally, routing a Swedish flotilla off Gronheim. Eventually a treaty signed at Nystadt on 10 September, 1721, ceded to Russia Esthonia, Livonia, Karelia, Vyborg, and the islands of the Gulfs of Finland and Riga, and granted Sweden, in return, restoration of most of the Swedish-Finnish territory occupied by Russia, and likewise the islands of the Gulf of Bothnia.

Having thus gained some breathing space, Peter returned to domestic affairs and introduced certain social, political, and ecclesiastical reforms which he considered necessary. In 1690 his marriage with Eudoxia Lopukhin had given him a son, Alexis. And in 1698, as he could not, owing to pressure of other matters, educate the lad himself, and the ex-Tsaritsa Natalia had died four years earlier, and Eudoxia had been interned in a convent, the father had entrusted his son to that son's aunt Natalia Alexievna, and she, again, had passed him on to relatives of hers of the Narishkin and Viazemski families, and they, in their turn, had delegated the care of him to some ignorant and dissolute priests who had moulded him to their own foolish stamp, and thereby led Peter, even amongst all his other cares, to put those cares temporarily aside, and arrange for a graduate of the University of Leipzig, Neugebauer by name, to take the lad away from the priests, and himself go on with his education. Then Neugebauer had quarrelled both with his pupil and with Menshikov, and

¹ On 11 December, 1718.

² Since 1700 she had acted as Swedish regent. And on Charles's death she was elected queen, despite that the direct heir was the Duke of Holstein.

had to be dismissed; and in his place there had been engaged a tutor just as unsuitable—one Baron Huissen. And the result of this latter step had been that, even at eighteen, Alexis knew practically no French, no German, no arithmetic, and no grammar.

In 1707, however, Huissen proposed a marriage of his pupil to Princess Charlotte Sophia of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. And to this project Peter consented. And though Alexis himself shrank from being wedded to a spouse not of the Orthodox faith, wedded to her he was on 14 October, 1711—the scene of the ceremony being the palace of the Queen of Poland and Electress of Saxony.¹ Alexis, a youth diffident and secretive of nature, disliked everything that was not Russian throughout. The more, then, did he dread a parent who never ceased to urge upon him adoption of European manners, speech, and dress, until Alexis felt absolutely crushed. Meanwhile he saw his mother banished to a far convent, and not only had to connive at his father's bullying of all and sundry, but, worse still, had to listen to constant abuse of his most cherished ideals — of Russia's olden-time faith, methods, and customs. Yet he could not flee from his *milieu*. He could only remain in it, and grow more and more morosely misanthropic, and succumb to such drunkenness as led him, in his turn, to bully persons weaker than himself, to outrage his wife, on one occasion to kick her when pregnant, and to take for mistress an ex-maid-servant employed by the Viazemski family. Finally, in 1715, when Charlotte was dead, Peter bade him either mend his ways or enter a monastery: and when, after two years of his doing neither of these things, but living as before, and falling wholly under the influence of his mistress, and displaying complete aversion alike to State work and to his father, that father again threatened him, and this time hinted at exemplary

¹ Consort of ex-King Augustus II.

punishment in case of non-compliance, Alexis did at last resolve upon flight and, with his mistress, sought first of all the mansion of the Austrian vice-chancellor, Count Schönborn, in Vienna, and then the imperial château at Ehrenberg (which Charles VI, brother-in-law to the late Princess Charlotte, offered him as a temporary residence, in spite of his, Charles's, distaste for the inopportuneness of the visit), and, lastly, Naples—in which latter city Peter Tolstói and Alexander Rumiantsev, emissaries sent by the Tsar, overtook him, and exacted from him a promise that, in return for being allowed to retain his mistress, he would return home.

On 3 February, 1718, therefore, father and son once more confronted one another. And the interview proved to be a very terrible one. On the one side, the father demanded of the son renunciation of his right of succession. On the other side, the son demanded that in that case he should be allowed to live his own life. And in the end the son was thrown into prison, and tortured there at intervals until 26 June, when he died of the constantly repeated agony. To succeed him as Tsarevitch he left a two-year-old boy, Peter.

At first the Tsar may not have realized the full implication of the tragedy. At all events he resumed his work with his usual restlessness and energy, and variously helped or goaded on his assistants, and visited foreign rulers to dispose them in his country's favour, and studied foreign constitutions and orders with a view to borrowing thence items likely to be useful to Russia. For by now Europe had ceased to look upon Russia's sovereign as a "barbarian" who might, forsooth, be interested in technique and science, but certainly was not sufficiently cultured also to be interested in philosophy and literature. Poltava, Hango, and the rest had changed all that. Foreign eyes now winked at Peter's whims, extravagancies, and penchant for women and wine. "My compliments!" once said to him the

King of Denmark. "I understand, my brother, that you keep mistresses?" "I do," Peter replied. "Yet, all taken together, those whores cost me less than you yourself pay for a single one of your own." And as regards wine, Baron Polinitz wrote of a visit paid to Berlin by Peter in 1717: "On not a day is he not overtaken with liquor." France alone, of European States, forbore to bow before the Tsar. Yet the reception accorded him in 1717 by Paris and the French regent never faded from his memory. A M. de Liboy who was sent to meet Peter at Dunkirk during that visit afterwards reported to Versailles:

The Tsar is very great of stature, yet bent somewhat, so that ordinarily his head protrudeth. Also, he is black-avised of countenance, and beareth something fierce in his air, despite that he is lively of spirit and understanding, with a grandeur of manner which he never for long maintaineth.

Not unnaturally, Peter surprised the good Parisians. Yet let us remember also the moment when, halting before a bust of Richelieu, he cried: "Ah, how I would give one-half of my empire if proper governance of the other half might be taught me by such a man as thou!" Long and earnestly, too, did he engage in conversation with the doctors of the Sorbonne.

From Paris Peter went to Spa for a "cure," before returning home via Amsterdam, Berlin, and Dantzic. But he realized, by the year 1724, that all the medicinal waters in the world could not arrest the progress of the malady which a year later ended his life. So, to banish care, he more than ever worked, caroused. During August of the year named the Saxon Minister wrote in his diary: "For six days past hath the Tsar not left his chamber because of debaucheries occasioned by the baptism of a new church with three thousand bottles of wine." Also Peter, at this period, went to Ladoga

to view the works on the canal there, and inspected metal factories at Monetsk, and salt works at Novgorod and Staraia Russa, and visited Moscow to crown his "Katerinushka," and, after returning temporarily to St. Petersburg, set forth by water for Sestrovetsk. On the way, however, a military barge from Kronstadt was seen to be stranded on a sandbank, and, through plunging overboard to help in hauling the barge clear, he caught a chill which obliged him to return home again. This time a grave shock awaited him there. This was because an anonymous letter told him that his "Katerinushka" had, after all, played him false, with, for her partner in doing so, one William Mons, a young chamberlain, brother to the Tsar's former mistress, Anna Mons. Peter at once set to work to discover the identity of the letter's writer, and, on succeeding in the task, personally questioned his correspondent in the torture chamber of the Petropavlovski Fortress. Then he paused awhile. Action on his part did not follow with its usual thunderous speed. It was as though, for the reason that in the present instance the matter in hand affected his honour, and therefore his very life, he wished to gain time. Not until 20 November did he move. Then he invited Mons to supper with himself and the Tsaritsa, and talked long and familiarly with his guest, but retired earlier than usual on the excuse of fatigue. Mons also retired early, and had scarcely entered his chamber when officials arrived and carried him off to the Petropavlovski Fortress, where next day, on being examined, he confessed so readily as to render torture superfluous. He was executed on the 26th of the month. The previous evening Peter visited him in his cell, and said that he regretted the necessity of the parting; but as for Catherine, she showed only callous indifference, and on the day of the execution behaved with her usual gaiety, and in the evening sent for the princesses and their dancing-master, and with them practised the steps of

the minuet. So Peter put her to a stern proof indeed: on the day after the execution he told her that he had cut off her personal allowances, and then, bidding her accompany him on a drive through the city, had the *cortège* halted before the scaffold on which Mons's headless body still was lying, and helped her to alight, and led her to the scaffold's very edge. Yet even then, with her skirts almost brushing the corpse of her lover, Catherine still smiled—she scarcely so much as glanced in the corpse's direction. Next Peter had the head pickled, and deposited it, in a jar of spirit, in her bed-chamber. Yet still, steeling herself to the grisly object's propinquity, she remained unmoved, and thereby issued virtually the victor. Guillemote de Villebois, a Breton naval officer of the day who had taken service in Russia's fleet, tells us that, in his opinion, Peter did not at once act as Henry VIII of England acted only because first he wished to secure his daughters' future. Well, at that period Peter certainly did see his negotiations for a marriage between Anna, his eldest daughter, and the Duke of Holstein, consummated with a wedding ceremony on 24 November, and also continued his attempts to arrange a marriage between Elizabeth, his second daughter, and either the King of France or a French prince of the blood. And very possibly this last project it was that saved Catherine's life, for things at that time became complicated with, in addition, *pourparlers* for a Franco-Russian political, as well as a matrimonial, alliance, and Tolstoi and Ostermann, who conducted the *pourparlers*, would know how to make Peter realize the force of the contention that "scarce would the French king care to wed the daughter of a second Anne Boleyn."

However that may be, signs of a dawning reconciliation at length appeared, and increased until, one evening when all the Court was assembled, the Tsaritsa made formal and low obeisance before her consort in token of

repentance, and was kindly addressed by him in response, and once more admitted to his supper table.

Two weeks later the Tsar became so ill as to have to take to his bed. Physicians were summoned in haste, and—but let the then French ambassador, Campredon, tell the remainder of the story, even as he told it in a dispatch to his Government dated 10 February, 1725:

The sickness from which the late-deceased Czar [as Campredon spells the title] suffered arose of an earlier, and a poorly healed, venereal malady. Since his return from Ladoga ¹ he had never enjoyed but languishing health, or applied himself much to State affairs, despite that he appeared abroad as usual. Then on the night of January the twentieth there seized him a grave retention of the bladder, and he was given remedies, and, a few days later, declared free from danger. But other physicians were summoned, and, amongst them, Lazariti, an Italian of great skill. And when Lazariti was informed of the malady's first cause he adjudged that the Czar would fall into no straits so long as he followed the treatment proposed by himself, Lazariti—to wit, removal of stagnant water from the bladder, and, prevention of inflammation, and, thereafter, curative treatment of the ulcer which, according to Lazariti, existed beyond doubt in the neck of the bladder. Howbeit, this counsel was rejected by Monsieur Blumen-trost as not having come from himself. And therefore only palliative measures were continued. Thus the Czar remained until the morning of Saturday, the third of this month of February. Then, towards evening, he became greatly worse again, and later, during the night, suffered from convulsions whence, seemingly, he might never again issue. But to those convulsions there succeeded emissions, and as, on the morning of Sunday, the said emissions were found to be exceedingly offensive, the Italian did once more urge withdrawal of all water soever from the bladder. And this was done at ten of the morrow's morning by an English surgeon named Horn, and with success, so that there were taken from the bladder nigh upon four litres

¹ At the end of, as we have seen, the October of the previous year.

of a liquid truly horrible of infection, and having mingled with it morsels of flesh and decayed membrane. The Czar then felt much relieved, and rested for a few hours, and again was declared free from danger. The night of Monday too he passed in fair tranquillity, but towards ten of the morrow's morning he asked for something to eat, and, being served with oaten gruel, had but swallowed a few spoonfuls when again fever took him. And now none any longer doubted that the ailing portion was affected with gangrene, and that no remedy could avail. Howbeit, the physicians sent not word of this unto the Czarina: only did M. Lazariti reply to M. le Comte de Tolstoy, when he inquired of him after the Czar's health, that if there were any measures which ought to be taken for the welfare of the State they should be taken forthwith, since the hour now was arrived, and the Czar fated not to live much longer. True enough, convulsions seized upon him during the night of Tuesday, and also a great delirium, so that he was heard to say that he had sacrificed his own blood, and then did leap from the bed, and strive with the attendants as though to open the window for more air. But almost in the act he fell because of weakness, and so was restored to his bed. And from that moment until his demise he lay, I should deem, in agony, and could speak no more than a few words, and make no testamentary dispositions. Nor was this proposed to him — whether through fear of that seeming, in his eyes, to be a foretelling of his death, or whether because the Czarina and her friends knew already the dying sovereign's testamentary wishes, and desired not to risk therein a change born of a spirit burdened and rendered feeble with great pain. But almost never, throughout, did the Czarina leave him. And it was she who, at five of the morning of the eighth of this month, two days ago, closed for him his eyes and his mouth.

Another version of the closing scene is that at two o'clock in the morning Peter asked for writing materials, but succeeded in tracing only the words "I give all——" before the pen fell from his hand. An hour later his eldest daughter, who had been sent for to write from his

dictation, arrived. But by that time he was finally plunged in unconsciousness.

The passing of Peter lifted from everyone a sort of nightmare. Four years earlier the Saxon minister wrote in his diary, under date of May:

The temperament of the Tsar hath never been altogether of the most polished, but now he is becoming more and more intolerable daily. Fortunate the man who never is called upon to approach him!

For as the years advanced Peter became increasingly morose and distrustful—threw around himself a network of spies, and set up a regime of an inquisitorial nature which every class found a crushing burden: whilst at the same time his jealousy of his work became such that he could tolerate neither modification nor criticism, and both his innate grossness and his innate disregard of the wishes of others grew likewise.

But his disappearance did not at once end the day's evils. For one thing, the polemic which had sprung during his lifetime from his reforms' vigorous impulsion of Russian life Europe-ward still continued, even as it is continuing now. Whilst he was alive there were colleagues of his who shared Lomonosov's feeling when he cried: "O Russia, he was thy god! O Russia, he was thy god!" But the masses, as an entity influenced by the clergy, and the Old Believers, as an entity persecuted by Peter, held him to be Antichrist. All that the two parties had in common was that at least they knew him to have accomplished a radical revolution, and brought into being a Russia distinct *in toto* from the old. No one could ignore the facts of his creation of a powerful fleet, of his transformation of his army into a weapon of modern times, of his establishment of relations with the West, and of his importation of technical improvement. Men only could differ in their appraisal of those facts. What some called harmful others thought

expedient. What some considered meritorious others deemed a menace to the national heritage. What some took to be a giant stride along the road of progress others classed as the calamitous whim or experiment of a tyrant. And both the one school and the other based its contention upon the concrete fact that Peter's reforms had in them without exception at once the accidental and the inevitable, at once the useful and the superfluous. And if the accidental and the superfluous most catch the eye during a study of Peter's reign in the light purely of his personal activity, and solely of his reforms' external aspect, those reforms need but to be placed in due relation to the time and the setting of pre-Petrine achievements of like sort, and to be compared with the latter, for it to be seen that every phenomenon of Russia's life before Peter's day, social, political, and economic, evinces a tendency to reform absolutely identical with the tendency upon which ultimately he set the seal of success. Again, the very fact that his movement towards progress was a movement old-established proves that never could the obstacles to that movement have been removed by him at a blow, as he is alleged to have done. Indeed, no sooner was he gone than the soil upon which he had worked showed itself to have been soil insufficiently prepared. Adoption of French dress, a shaven chin, Western manners, and the like did not of necessity imply that Russian brains had at the same time absorbed Europe's culture, mentality, and civilization, any more than Peter's imported Swedish "Colleges" (Ministries) and the rest could ever have found a sound basis in Russia so long as Russia's population, the population which those "Colleges" administered, lacked the requisite degree of politico-economic development.

At the same time it cannot be denied that it is difficult to distinguish where Peter's part in the reforms was not purely a personal part. Many were the projects sub-

mitted for his consideration, but always he confined his adoption of them to selection of that in their content which directly answered the current problem. And inasmuch as his genius was of the sort most delighting in such matters as the creation of a fleet and the modernization of an army, he spent quite the first thirty years of his reign in those pursuits, and meanwhile left direction of the country's internal affairs to others. Social, political, and economic questions had for him an interest only when the resolution of such questions became imperative for, say, acquisition of additional recruits, those recruits' commissariat and equipment, payment of foreign military artificers, subsidization of native naval contractors, and the like.

Nevertheless he thought much of developing and embellishing the capital city which he raised amid Ingrian swamps, the congeries of veritable "lake dwellings" which, though based upon the lives of ten thousand workers and more, he used to call "my paradise," and to flourish before the world as the most eligible possible residential resort. And from the time of Poltava he paid attention also to foreign policy, and, during his closing years, even to such ecclesiastical reforms as suppression of the patriarchate, and replacement of that spiritual institution with a lay college, a lay ministry. When he ascended the throne the patriarchal *cathedra* was occupied by an ignorant prelate who, a sworn foe to Westernism, sought eventually, when come to his deathbed, to bind Adrian, his successor, to a similar policy; but the instant that Adrian attempted to put that into practice Peter gave him a sharp admonition, and after Adrian's death the office lost its last shred of authority and prestige, and the Tsar told certain inquirers as to who was to be Adrian's successor: "I myself. I, even I, will be your Patriarch."¹ Of course, his purpose in this was less to guard the

¹ This was in 1700.

temporal power against spiritual rivalry than to reform (according to his lights) the national Church. When he replaced the patriarchate with a lay council and a State secretary, and made of that secretary (known as the Procurator-General) just a figure-head representative of the supreme power whilst the council was in session, with no more than a right of veto on the supreme power's behalf, Peter so acted because he looked upon the Church as less a society divinely established than a wheel (and an essential wheel at that) of the governmental machine which would function better if regulated by a lay authority in direct dependence upon the sovereign than if regulated by an ecclesiastical authority indifferently manageable, and difficult to dismiss. Finally, and for a like reason, namely a better definition of, respectively, the temporal power and the spiritual, he in 1721 instituted a body which, rather pompously known as "The Holy Synod," was to function according to a "Church Reglament" modelled on the charter of the figurehead "Directive Senate," whilst the mystical character attaching to the person of the Patriarch as the celestial power's earthly representative—well, in stepping into the Patriarch's shoes, the Tsar *ipso facto* inherited it, and thus repeated the idea underlying the primitive notion of Cæsaro-Papism.

There has also prevailed interminable debate over the question of how far Peter was a believer or an atheist. In his youth he was an impulsively and insatiably inquisitive inquirer, yet received no religious instruction of a solid kind, and no reliable moral guidance. Hence, on encountering a man superior in intellect to himself, as well as a man highly persuasive and innately specious, he fell in with that man's views of life's problems with ease, and never afterwards displayed much independence or originality in the matter. The man concerned was Theofan Prokopovitch. A student, in the first instance, of the Roman College of Saint Athanasius, an institution

which Gregory XIII established primarily for the education of Hellenes and Slavs, Theofan later, after returning to Russia, abjured the Catholic faith, and replaced it with the Baconian-Cartesian cult formulated by Protestant theorists for enunciation of dogma and regulation of socio-religious life. And Peter, in Theofan's wake, came similarly to suppose that lay morality was better than the Church's, and a people's spiritual life controllable by a popular State; so that he took to patronage of Lutheranism, attendance at Protestant services, participation in Quaker meetings, and protection of adherents to the Augsburg Confession.¹ Yet when these apparent marks of sympathy led observers to presume that Peter really cherished deep religious sentiments they speedily became undeceived on noting that he also kept company with Jesuits. All that the Papal Nuncio Santa Croce found himself able to report to Rome was: "No man knoweth what at bottom is Tsar Peter's true faith," whilst Father Milan reported:

A miracle of the very first order alone could warrant us in hoping for Tsar Peter's conversion, and arrival at an understanding with the Vatican. Far too great obstacles thereto exist. Firstly would he need to make full submission unto the Pope's authority. And then would he need to accept our morality in all its fullness. And then would he need to forswear his caprices and abuses of power.

For this birth, and then death, of Catholic hopes for reunion Peter had only himself to thank, since first he had discussed the reunion question with the doctors of the Sorbonne, and then he had asked them to give his attendant bishops a memorandum on the subject, and then these bishops had, of course, rejected the memorandum.

Another point connected with ecclesiastical reforms was that Peter's discovery of the cost involved by an

¹ A declaration of faith which, issued at Augsburg in 1530, set the seal upon the German Reformation.

ever-growing State led him, eventually, to deprive his episcopal sees and monastic establishments of the right to control their own property and revenues, and to transfer it from them to a lay institution calculated to direct the bulk of the proceeds into the coffers of the treasury. The same motive led him to limit the number of parochial clergy to one priest and one deacon per parish, to relegate the remaining parochial clergy to the army, and, in order to check the prevalent priestly habit of wandering from cure to cure, and even from diocese to diocese, to forbid priests leaving their parishes without previous official permission, and to command that any priest so doing should forthwith be arrested, compelled to live under surveillance by the local authorities, and, if a second time so offending, unfrocked.

Hence the clergy's position under Peter became as grievous as did everyone else's. And those who believed, when he died, that the old ways could speedily be restored as speedily found themselves mistaken, for Russia, launched upon a new road, and destined never again to leave it, was, for the next century, to serve not her own political ends, but Europe's.

CHAPTER IX

PETER THE GREAT'S SUCCESSORS

PETER died without nominating an heir, and the problem evoked a great deal of difficulty and negotiation. The extant factions were a faction which, standing for Catherine, had at its head Menshikov and Tolstoi, and a faction which, standing for young Peter, son of the late Tsarevitch Alexis, had at its head the aristocratic families—the Repnins, the Golitzins, the Dolgorukis, and so forth. The dispute between the two factions lasted until on a night when the pro-Peter faction was holding a meeting in an upper room of the Winter Palace there suddenly entered a party of Guardsmen, and there made itself heard from below a din of cheering and drum rolls. The result was that Catherine, as “Empress and Autocrat Sovereign,” ascended the throne in virtue of Peter the Great’s quasi-legal Act of 1722 (whereby selection of an heir to the throne stood delegated to the monarch in being), and of Peter’s quasi-legal Act of 1724 (whereby Catherine, “as one ever tireless in the State’s services,” had, as seen, been crowned).

Catherine, however, was wholly ignorant of State affairs, and handed them over to Menshikov therefore, whilst herself, for all that she had been the great Tsar’s helpful, and even devoted, comrade, assuming the part of the peasant woman in an opera whom fate raises, for sport, to the elevation of a throne. The first use to which she put her freedom was to recall to Court the entire band of brothers and sisters whom Peter had relegated to the provinces, and maintained there on allowances.

One Skavronski alone attained eminence, despite the tribe's bedizenment with dignities and titles. And even he did so, not in Catherine's reign but in the next one, through procuring marriage of his daughter to an ex-lover of Catherine's, the Prince Sapiuha of Poland.

Catherine's mode of life was gross and sensual. Whole nights would she spend in banqueting and carousing with such temporary paramours as Loewenwolde, Sapiuha, Devier (whom she had made her *Polizmeister*, or Chief of Police), and others. Not unnaturally, such a Court example evoked unrest in the provinces, and the more so because most of the provincial clergy and gentry belonged to the pro-Peter faction rather than to Catherine's. At last, for appeasement of the discontent, Catherine declared young Peter her heir, and Chancellor Ostermann added to that a proposal that, despite Peter's immaturity, and despite canonical regulations, the boy should marry his aunt Elizabeth. Next, the Viennese Court, wishing for reasons of its own to conciliate Menshikov, countered this by suggesting that Peter should marry Menshikov's daughter Maria: and as Catherine too was not averse to retaining her former lover's good will, she adopted the latter scheme—at all events in principle—and let Menshikov, when Devier and Tolstoi (neither of whom desired to witness Menshikov's further aggrandisement) objected to the project, dispatch the one to Siberia, and the other to Solovetski.

In 1725, as we have seen, Peter the Great secured a union of Anna, his elder daughter, with the Duke of Holstein; and on the strength of that Catherine now asked the King of Denmark to restore to her son-in-law, the duke, the latter's old Duchy of Schleswig, and, when he declined to do so, appealed to Charles VI of Austria. Yet, though both Charles and the King of Prussia promised the assistance requested, the only outcome was the sudden appearance in the Baltic of a Danish fleet,

and Russia's escape from a disastrous war merely through the coincidence of Catherine's demise.

Complications of equal gravity threatened on Menshikov conceiving a project of preventing a talked-of marriage between Anna Ivanovna of Russia¹ and Maurice of Saxony, and thereby annexing the Duchy of Courland for himself. But in the event neither he nor Maurice got hold of the duchy—it remained, as before, a dependency of the Russian Crown.

In matters of domestic policy Menshikov continued, so far as he knew how, the policy of Peter the Great. Only because his many enemies often sought to put spokes in his wheel did he, towards consolidation of his position, diminish the competency of a Senate which Peter had always sought to maintain supreme, and annul Peter's skeleton urban administration, and hand over exclusively to governors of provinces the powers which hitherto the towns had shared with them.

Catherine's undistinguished reign ended on 6 May, 1727, and once more the crown passed to a minor. Which of course afforded Menshikov, until finally he met with disgrace and downfall, a fresh lease of authority. The twelve-year-old boy who now ascended the throne as Peter II had had the Duke of Holstein given him for tutor by Catherine, but soon Menshikov had both this husband of Peter's stepsister Anna and Anna herself shown out of the country, and then sought incontestably to make himself ruler of the roast by having the young sovereign betrothed to his daughter Maria. By this he set much store. On the strength of it he fitted himself out with a magnificent barge in which daily to cross from his palace on the Isle of Vasilii to the mainland, and with a gilded coach the fan-shaped back of which displayed a princely coronet. But never did he move anywhere without a sumptuous escort. But these splendours were not to last. Gradually

¹ Daughter of Peter the Great's elder brother Ivan.

the Dolgoruki family influenced young Peter against him, and, in particular, urged Peter not, after all, to make Menshikov's daughter his consort. The end was that one day in 1727 (16 September) Menshikov had to start for his remote country estate near Oranienburg, and there reside at a distance of four hundred kilometres from Moscow. Yet he was not fated, even so, to die there. Later the Tsar received from either an enemy or a blundering friend of Menshikov's an anonymous letter which, after urging restoration of the ex-favourite to power, went on to express most candid criticisms of the sovereign's policy in general. At once measures still more severe were taken. All Menshikov's huge possessions were confiscated to the State, and he and his family banished from Oranienburg to Siberia, where he died two years later.

Practically these unscrupulous intrigues left the Dolgoruki family the Tsar's sole guides and counsellors, especially as regards Alexander and his son Ivan. And not only did the family inveigle Peter into ways of life precluding his application to more serious pursuits; they inveigled him into ways of life prejudicial to his health. For instance, as Peter much loved the pleasures of the chase, the Dolgorukis organized hunting expeditions in the forest around Moscow which kept him away from supervision of the State's affairs for long periods at a time. Also, they persuaded him to make Moscow, instead of St. Petersburg, his permanent place of residence, and, by thus removing him from the society of the Court, finally completed his subjection. Nay, they even prevented free intercourse between him and his ministers, and between him and his relatives. Tearfully, one day, old Ostermann, who, like most of his Petersburgan colleagues, never could take to residence in Moscow, exclaimed: "Behold, they are undoing our monarch's very health! It is as though they wished for his death." Of course, Ostermann could always

weep easily, and about very little, but this time the tears were genuine, and he spoke as a wise and devoted servant of the Crown. Finally, on the death of the Grand Duchess Natalia (who had been the only one of her brother's relatives to retain an influence over him) in 1728, the Dolgorukis determined to effect a marriage between Peter and Alexander Dolgoruki's daughter Catherine. In reality Catherine, a beautiful, spirited young girl of seventeen—and therefore four years older than the Tsar—was in love with Comte de Millesimo, Secretary to the Austrian Embassy: but, for all that, the Dolgorukis planned that during another of the periodical hunting expeditions the young monarch should find himself very much *tête-à-tête* with Catherine. And when Peter had, to quote memoirs written by a kinsman of hers, "taken from her that which he never could restore," the nuptials were fixed. The day chosen was 19 January, 1729, the Feast of the Epiphany, but precisely two weeks earlier the young Tsar fell ill. At first the malady was thought to be merely a chill, but next day it was seen to be smallpox. Hastily the dismayed Dolgorukis resolved to forge an imperial will purporting bequeathal of the crown to Catherine, and, for the purpose, indited copies in duplicate, and then, whilst young Ivan Dolgoruki, the Tsar's chief intimate, and therefore the member of the family best acquainted with the Tsar's sign manual, appended to one copy a good imitation of Peter's signature, dispatched Alexander Dolgoruki to the palace with the other one. The idea was that Alexander should, if possible, contrive to see the Tsar in private, and so procure a genuine signature, and thereby obviate production of the forged one, but he failed entirely, for the wily Ostermann had not left the Tsar's presence since the first moment of the malady's onslaught. Peter died on the very day which had been fixed for his nuptials: and though Mannstein's memoirs state that Ivan Dolgoruki ran to

the palace immediately upon the death, and, brandishing his sword, paraded the corridors for a while with shouts of "Long live the Empress Catherine!" no response resulted, and he had at last to withdraw and burn the forgeries. Like Catherine I, Peter II reigned for two years.

In the ordinary course the throne ought then to have passed to Peter the Great's elder daughter Anna, Duchess of Holstein, and, later, to her posterity, but the Supreme Privy Council which assembled as soon as Peter II was gone rejected Anna's candidature, and Dimitri Golitzin moved that, no male heir in direct descent from Peter the Great being available, the crown should return into the elder, the Ivanovitch, branch of the family, and be offered to one of Ivan Alexeivitch's daughters. Of these daughters Catherine, the elder of the two, had married the Duke of Mecklenburg, left him in 1719, and now was living in Moscow: but soon she was placed out of the running by the Council, for the latter wished to gain time to frame a constitutional charter for the new sovereign's preliminary signature, and also it was thought that if Catherine were chosen for the throne she might use it for furtherance of claims of her husband's as well. So eventually the Council fixed upon Anna, Dowager Duchess of Courland, the younger sister of Catherine.

Anna, widow of Frederick William, Duke of Courland, who had died in 1711, was then living at Mitau, and, though barely tolerated by the nobility of the region, standing upon terms of intimacy with a petty Courlander landowner named John Biren, at one time her private secretary, and now her chamberlain. Biren was the second of three sons of an ex-officer of the Polish service and, born in 1690, and sprung of Westphalian stock, was rough of manner and not excessively intelligent. Yet still he cannot have been wholly the boor which Russian legend represents. True, he loved

horses, dogs, and the chase, but also he had a taste for books, and established a fine library after his removal to St. Petersburg. And Anna herself was not a sot throughout, nor fundamentally bad, but, as the daughter of an unhealthy sire, a victim, rather, of heredity. Certainly she was gross, sensual, and addicted to cruelty and practical joking, but none of those things were things much likely to shock or surprise the then Russian people, whilst, in addition, she had been brought up by a mother who detested her, and given practically no education save in the German tongue. However—such the woman to whom, in 1730, the members of the Supreme Privy Council of Russia decided to entrust their country and its destinies.

First of all the Council sent Vasilii Dolgoruki, Prince Golitzin, and General Leontiev, members of its body, to Mitau, to acquaint Anna with the decision arrived at. And with them the three delegates took a list of *punkti* ("points," conditions) which Anna was to sign before her accession. Those *punkti*, conditions, were that never at any time was Anna to declare war, to conclude peace, to initiate taxation, to dispose of a State revenue, to punish a noble, to confiscate his property, or to choose for herself a spouse or a successor without previous consent of the Council obtained. Well, Anna signed all these conditions. And at once, when she had done so, she left Mitau for Moscow, and accomplished the journey in very quick time.¹ For already she had determined to take a short way with the *punkti*—the more so as Vasilii Dolgoruki had refused to let Biren accompany her. She might sign deeds limiting her power, forsooth, but thereafter she was going to do what she liked! In this respect circumstances helped her, for just then Moscow happened to have within her walls an unusually large number of nobles, come thither

¹ First, however, according to Kluchevsky, she demanded an advance of travelling expenses.

for the late sovereign's intended nuptials, and these nobles had taken to assembling in the houses of the Trubetskoi, the Bariatinskis, the Cherkasskis, and other aristocratic families, and debating the Council's alleged intention of putting itself into the sovereign's place, and gathering the supreme power into its hands. And inasmuch as Peter the Great's old colleagues, Golovkin, Ostermann, and the rest, were as vehemently opposed to the Council's supposed oligarchical tendency as they were to further advancement of the Dolgorukis and the Golitzins, and they had the Guards behind them, the result was that Anna successfully tore in pieces the constitutional charter which she had signed and then heartily requited the Dolgorukis and the Golitzins for having sought to thwart her wishes and intentions. Ivan Dolgoruki she had flogged. Two of Ivan's uncles she had beheaded. The same with Vasili Dolgoruki. A fifth member of the family she caused to be deprived of his tongue. Young Catherine she had interned in a convent. And she sentenced all the Golitzins to terms of Court banishment whence they emerged only during a later reign.

Also, the new sovereign and autocrat had the imperial seat of residence removed back to the capital city of Peter the Great. And there, in 1732, she was rejoined by Biren and a German swarm before relapsing into a life lived according to her fancy, with State policy relegated, in its every detail, to Biren, Ostermann, and the Senate—the first-named of whom acted, of course, on no legal warranty beyond that, as always in Russia, the term "favourite" implied as much. For the rest, Anna cared nought for either dignity or the setting of a worthy example. Rising each morning at seven, and performing a hurried toilet, and then drinking her coffee, she would spend the next hour or two in inspecting gewgaws and other finery (which she loved to excess). Then, nine o'clock being come, she would receive

ministers or the Secretary of the Cabinet (the Supreme Privy Council's successor), and sign documents almost without looking at them. Next, repairing to the palace mews, she would either take riding exercise or shoot at marks or live animals, even as when staying at Peterhof in the summer time she would practise upon sparrows, swallows, and magpies with fowling-pieces which she kept always ready-loaded in her room. And, next, she would hold a reception or an audience, and then dine. Ordinarily her guests at dinner were Biren and his family, but on festival days, when she dined publicly and in state, she shared the meal with her niece (the Princess Anna, daughter of her elder sister Catherine) and her cousin (the Grand Duchess Elizabeth). After which, supposing that the day was an ordinary one, she would bid Madame Biren and the children retire, and then stretch herself upon a couch to digest the meal, and have Biren stretched upon a couch beside her. Lastly she would summon her maids-of-honour, command them to sing to her, and then hold a second reception, or else have "quinze" or "faro" played for stakes often running to ten or fifteen thousand ducats, with the empress holding the bank and paying out its losses, but disdaining to rake in its gains—a feature of the proceedings which, of course, caused invitations to such functions to be much sought after.

Other amusements of the empress's were the witnessing of flagellation and torture. She liked buffoons as well, and kept six of them for her special diversion. Two, Balakirev and Lacosta, were legacies from Peter the Great's establishment (once he appointed Lacosta, a Portuguese Jew, "Tsar" of an uninhabited Baltic islet, as "King of the Samoyedes"), and the other four consisted of Michael Golitzin, Alexis Apraxin (Golitzin's son-in-law), Nikita Volkonski, and a violinist at Anna's Italian Opera named Pedrillo. And as regards the standard of wit obtaining, it can be judged from the

following. One day Biren said to Pedrillo: "Is it true that you have for wife a she-goat?" and the buffoon replied: "It is, monseigneur, and my wife, moreover, hath conceived, and fain would I be given some monies for the young ones' rearing." A few days later word reached Biren from Pedrillo that his she-goat had now been delivered, and would Biren, and all and sundry, be so good as, in consonance with ancient custom, to wait upon the happy couple with congratulations and gifts? And a bed was rigged up on the stage of the palace theatre, and when the company attended and the curtain was raised, it "discovered" Pedrillo and the goat recumbent together. Lastly, the empress leading, all filed past the bed and tendered Pedrillo largess. Another duty which the empress sometimes, on Sundays, imposed upon the buffoons was to line the corridor through which she would return from church, and on her approach to pose themselves like hens in the act of laying eggs, and at the same time emit suitable cacklings and chuckings; whilst, to render the sport better still, the courtiers in the empress's train would, with sticks of charcoal, dower the buffoons' features with whiskers and moustaches. Another diversion of Anna's was that five of the six buffoons should lean their backs against a wall, and the sixth come along and, one by one, trip them up. Once Balakirev objected to the tripping act, and received in requital a flogging which left him unable to turn upon his bed for two days. Also, Anna would bid all six engage in a free fight, and wage it at least in such a manner that a measure of blood was drawn. She loved too every sort of show and stage-play and spectacle; whilst her taste for the grotesque, the abnormal, and the distorted in literature may be estimated from the fact that, having heard of certain verses written by the poetaster Trediakov, she had him read them to her with his own mouth. He himself subsequently wrote of the incident:

This day I was accorded the immense honour of reading some verses of my own to her Majesty on my knees. When I had finished them she yet further honoured me, and in a very special degree, by twice, with her own hand, buffeting my cheeks.

But what afforded Anna supreme delectation was when, in January 1740, there was built for her benefit an edifice known as "the ice palace." It happened in this way. Amongst her domestics there was a Kalmuk woman of portentous ugliness, and also of surprising skill in the art of pulling grimaces and executing self-contortions. And once when the woman happened jestingly to say that she could do with a mate the empress sent to Michael Golitzin, the buffoon, to let him know that she had found for him a wife, and would herself pay the marriage costs. Then for the couple there was built on the frozen Neva a "palace of ice," an edifice containing reception-room, bedroom, and corridor, and fitted with all things pertinent. And on its completion the empress invited to the ceremony national representatives from all over the empire, and on the appointed date the proceedings began with celebration of the Orthodox Church's marriage rite, and were continued with a carnival procession such as Peter the Great used so dearly to love¹ (with the procession's members riding variously upon oxen, goats, swine, and deer, and playing upon musical instruments meanwhile, and the newly-married couple, on a gorgeously caparisoned elephant, coming last), and after a halt for refreshments in Biren's stables (where, in addition, Trediakov recited an "Ode," and national dances were performed), a completion of the march to the "palace of ice" (now brilliantly illuminated without and within, and thrown into relief with great bonfires on the banks),

¹ He is said to have organized them for the purpose of shaming a corrupt Church, but in any case they closely resembled those of the present Soviet Government.

a ceremonious putting of the bridal pair to bed beneath sheets and coverlets of real ice and snow, and lastly a sealing of the entrance to the "palace," so that the bridal pair could not possibly issue from it during the night. Marvellous to relate, however, the victims survived the ordeal, and after Anna's death went abroad, where two healthy boys were born to them and where, when the wife passed away, the husband married a second time, and in that second state of matrimony achieved a ripe old age.

When sitting in private Anna customarily wore a pale pink or a pale green semi-Oriental robe, and a sort of scarlet turban cap, thrust well backward much as the peasant women do with their kerchieves. And such was her love for bright colours that a Court regulation forbade any appearance at the palace in a sombre hue, and this forced even veterans like Ostermann and Cherkasski to disport themselves in tender pink and the rest. Nor might anyone have audience without a permit previously obtained from Biren. Biren too it was who allotted all Court appointments, from grand chamberlain (who at the time was Count Reinhold von Loewenwolde) to junior pageboy. Nor might any functionary of the kind enter the empress's presence, even if it was only to serve her with a glass of water, without, immediately upon entry, kissing her hand. Some such officiants kissed her feet as well. And some even included those of Biren. Indeed, it is said that the scullion whose duty it was daily to light the stove in the empress's bedroom proved so assiduous in saluting both the sovereign's and the favourite's feet that eventually he was created a noble with, as sole reminder to his posterity of that posterity's origin, an escutcheon bearing three stove-lids.

Anna, to provide herself with a successor, adopted her niece Elizabeth Catherine Christina, daughter of the Duchess of Mecklenburg, her elder sister, a lady who

had left her husband, Leopold, and returned to live in Russia, when the niece had been only a few months of age. Eventually Anna decided that she must find the niece (who, on reception into the Orthodox Communion, also had been named Anna) a spouse, and therefore sent Count Loewenwolde on a round of the European courts. When he returned thence he brought with him Prince Antoine Ulric of Brunswick-Beren, nephew of the Austrian Emperor, but Anna, on looking this feeble young man over, disapproved, as also did Biren—the latter principally for the reason that he himself had a candidate going, and that that candidate was his own son Peter, a youth five years younger than Anna's niece, but none the less qualified to give Biren the chance of one day seeing posterity of his on the Russian throne. And then the empress, veering round, decided that Prince Antoine *could* be accepted as her niece's suitor, and, the necessary arrangements having been made, the marriage rite was duly celebrated. Such was the princess's distaste for the prince that she spent her wedding night in walking about the palace grounds. Indeed, sharp admonitions from the empress were needed before she would fulfil her marital obligations at all. According to maids-of-honour who peeped through a chink during the interview, the empress even went to the length of giving the young bride several resounding slaps upon the cheek.

Nevertheless Biren was not deterred by his failure to effect a union between his son Peter and the Princess of Brunswick-Beren from seeking to secure his position otherwise. The course was the more necessary in that recently the empress had begun to show signs of the kidney disease which eventually carried her off; and therefore, on the Princess of Brunswick-Beren, in 1740, presenting her husband with a son (to whom the names of Ivan Antonovitch were given), he, Biren, sought to have himself appointed the child's tutor, or even regent,

seeing that the child was no sooner born than an imperial manifesto declared him imperial heir. True, he had in his veins more German blood than Russian—he was a Romanov only through his grandmother,¹ and reasonably that might have evoked protests from the Russian people: but then, as now, the Russian people feared power, and even power's shadow. Towards acquisition of the regency, Biren made his first step cultivation equally of the three German-Russian statesmen Ostermann, Munnich, and Loewenwolde and of the two Oriental-Russian statesmen Bestuzhev and Cherkasski. For all of these had a measure of influence over Anna. But only when Anna was at her last gasp (28 October, 1740) did she award Biren the coveted appointment. As soon as she had done so, and added the words "Fear not," she turned her eyes to Munnich, and seemed, with a look, to be trying to disarm that statesman's long-standing hostility to her old favourite.

The people showed itself so indifferent to Biren's nomination that Finch, the English ambassador, wrote home to his Government: "The change hath caused less disturbance even than if a regiment were marching across Hyde Park." This probably came of the fact that ever since Catherine I's demise the supreme power had been as open to all as a public shop. At first Biren thought of having the young Tsar's parents banished, or even conveyed to a remote spot and murdered; but these plans proved non-feasible. As a summary of the situation Mardeveld, the Prussian ambassador, wrote to his master, Frederick II: "Seventeen years of despotism,² unless the child die meanwhile—when the regent himself might gain the throne." But Mardeveld, for all his perspicacity, proved wrong. Biren remained regent for three weeks only—not for seventeen years.

¹ Catherine, Duchess of Mecklenburg, daughter of Peter the Great's elder brother Ivan.

² The age of imperial majority was eighteen.



PETER THE GREAT

On a November night some Preobrazhenski Guardsmen surrounded his residence, rudely awakened him, suppressed his attempts to cry out with thrusts of musket butts, and removed him in a half-swooning condition to Schlüsselberg. After which Anna Leopoldovna, Duchess of Brunswick-Beren, assumed the regency in his stead, and by revoking his regulation as to the troops and taverns, inaugurated general street festivity. Eventually, after six months in Schlüsselberg, the ex-regent was transferred to Siberia. And into his shoes as regards authority, a like German adventurer, Munnich, stepped.

With the House of Brunswick thus lodged solidly upon the throne—it was a sort of case of “J’y suis, j’y reste”—those who had contributed towards the *coup d’état* had to be rewarded. Munnich became “First Servitor of the Empire.” Prince Antoine Ulric became “Generalissimo.” Ostermann became “Grand Admiral.” Cherkasski was given the Chancellorship. Golovkin issued as Vice-Chancellor. And, next, all quarrelled, and continued to do so until, as regent, Anna Leopoldovna had first of all to prune Munnich’s powers and prerogatives, and then to dismiss him in favour of Ostermann.

Anna Leopoldovna had long cherished a passion for Count Linar, the Saxon minister. And equal to that passion for the count was her dislike of her husband. Such was the preoccupation that largely she neglected the State. True, in her regency Russia achieved an understanding with Prussia, but as also Russia could not break with Austria, then fiercely combating Frederick’s government, Russia remained practically seated upon two stools. Also, though Swedish blunders did largely help General Lacy to capture one Finnish town, only when Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great, acceded did the Swedish struggle finally conclude.

Since her mother’s¹ death Elizabeth had lived

¹ Catherine I.

altogether in exclusion from Court, since Anna feared her as a possible rival. Yet Elizabeth possessed numerous influential adherents amongst the middle class and military; and though hitherto those adherents had lacked the strength to act independently, it needed only a favourable opportunity and a few leaders versed in Court intrigue and the management of *coups d'état* to set Elizabeth upon the throne. And though Anna Leopoldovna cannot but have known of these underground workings of the pro-Elizabeth party, she was too engrossed with Count Linar to take them seriously. At all events there came a night when a detachment of the Preobrazhenskis entered the chamber where she and her husband were sleeping, and she realized that her term of rule was over.

CHAPTER X

THE EMPRESS ELIZABETH

It might be wondered why neither the Empress Anna, who detested Elizabeth, nor the Regent Anna, who feared her, ever confined Elizabeth in a convent, as the then method of disposing of an enemy or a rival whom one could not assassinate outright. But, according to one account, what prevented them was the existence of a nephew, a son of Anna, Duchess of Holstein, younger sister to Elizabeth, who always looked to the fortunes of his aunt.

However that may be, Elizabeth spent the time until her *coup d'état* partly at Moscow and partly at the family seat of Alexandrovsk, where she shared fully in the local life, and ran about the countryside with rustic maidens, and joined them in their singings and dancings. In Moscow too she kept open house, and especially for the Guards—seeking to turn their heads with her smiles, and plying them constantly with good cheer. “Of the blood of the great Peter thou art,” they would say. But she had in her the blood of her mother as well, and was essentially a product of the age, so that she grew up a woman violent, masterful, capricious, and, through defects of education, prone to luxury and love affairs. Who of her many lovers first gained her favour is not certain. All that is certain is that even before her *coup d'état* of 5 December, 1741, their number had become considerable, whilst also she was rumoured to be married to Count Alexis Razumovski. Yet this is not so. Thatmorganatic union, entered into in the village church of Perovo, near Moscow, was contracted only in the

year 1742. Nowhere in Europe had she attracted much political attention hitherto—Finch writing to his Government that “she is too gross to conspire,” and Mardeveld showing at least less than his usual perspicacity. After the *coup d'état*, however, Mardeveld made amends. In a dispatch dated 28 December, 1741, he wrote:

She of whom I speak hath no little beauty and grace, and an infinitude of accomplishments, and much spirit, and, withal, outward piety practised with exemplary zeal and industry. Unfortunately, she also was conceived under a fatal conjunction of Mars and Venus, so that she marketh all her days with sacrifices unto the Mother of Love, and causeth her pious works in that regard to surpass even those of the consorts of Claudius and Sigismund.¹ The first priest to acquire distinction through joint sacrifice with her was one well-wrought of stature, but a plain subject of Neptune, a plain mariner. And after him the office fell vacant for two years as regards eminence in full; it was performed, meanwhile, only by inferior officiants. Then did a veritable disciple of Apollo, one thunderous of voice, one born of the Ukraine, undergo investiture with the whole dignity, and cause it first to acquire true splendour. Then came a day when, having rashly defied weariness, and excessively sacrificed, the chief officiant succumbed to swoonings, and, robeless, his gracious protectress betook herself in haste unto the dwelling of an Hippocrates versed in the Cytherean mysteries, and besought him to aid the sick man. But Hippocrates (whom she found between his sheets) did but invite her, when she seated herself upon the bed, to sport with him also, and in every manner: and upon that, being anxious for Hippocrates to succour the dearest friend of her heart, she with anger responded: “Well dost thou know that it is not for thee that the hearth smoketh!” “Verily, yea,” said Hippocrates rudely. “But likewise I know that what thou doest with many a man of the common people thou couldest very well do with such as myself.” Howbeit, he,

¹ Messalina and a daughter of the Duke of Milan. The Sigismund is Sigismund I of Poland (1466–1548).

at the last, came and did her bidding. All this came to me from one who was present at the farce.

Of course "Hippocrates" was Lestocq, the Court physician. And this mention of him brings us to the tragi-comedy of which the epilogue was Elizabeth's ascent of the throne. The son of a refugee from revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Lestocq, in 1713, after serving as surgeon to various courts of North Germany, migrated to Russia, and, at first gaining the good graces of Peter the Great, was subsequently banished to Kazan, recalled thence by Catherine when become empress, and, despite his known immorality, given charge of Elizabeth, her sixteen-year-old daughter. At the present moment (1741) he was acting as mainspring of the plot designed to set Elizabeth upon the throne. That plot owed its first germination to the brain of Chétardie, the French ambassador, coupled with that of the Swedish minister, Baron Nolleken. These two diplomatists' mission at St. Petersburg was to undermine German influence there, and so render Russia less able to participate in European affairs. And the intermediary between them and the grand duchess was Lestocq. At first he was for an open declaration in Elizabeth's favour after distributing funds in suitable quarters, but to that course the French ambassador objected because he foresaw that the revolution would come about anyway, accomplish itself—and self-accomplishment would be cheaper. Then the authorities grew suspicious, and Lestocq heard that Ostermann was thinking of dispatching the Guards to Finland, to the Russo-Swedish front. So, as a *dénouement* of the sort would ruin the plot, Lestocq, being a skilful cartoonist, took a card, and drew upon one half of its face the grand duchess crowned and enthroned, and upon the other half the grand duchess in conventual garb, amid the instruments of self-discipline. And over both he wrote the word "Choose!" Then he showed Elizabeth the

result. She was still pondering over the card when some Guardsmen entered to announce that the enterprise must either be attempted immediately or abandoned, since the Guards' alternative now was either the enterprise or a Finnish winter campaign.

So Elizabeth, forced to make up her mind, fixed execution of the plot for the following night if in the meanwhile inquiries at the barracks showed the military attitude in general to be auspicious. Yet though such proved to be the case, Lestocq still would not move until emissaries of his had ascertained that Ostermann and Munnich were not on the *qui vive*, and also reconnoitred the Winter Palace. Then, as not a light was reported to be showing there, Lestocq proceeded to Elizabeth's chamber, and found her kneeling in prayer and, so unnerved was she, had much ado to get her to rise. But at last, throwing around her neck the Order of Saint Catherine and placing in her hands a cross, he led her downstairs. There a sleigh was ready waiting, and they entered it, whilst Michael Vorontzov and the Shuvalov brothers seated themselves in the rumble, and Alexis Razumovski and Saltykov and others entered a sleigh behind. Then all proceeded to the barracks of the Preobrazhenski Guards. And so little had details been prepared in advance that the party straightway was halted by the sentry on the gate, and the guard summoned, and a drum produced for a sounding of the alarm. Silencing the drum with a quick thrust of his sword Lestocq, however, sent the soldiers already posted in the affair to apprise their comrades, and soon the whole corps had assembled. Then Elizabeth alighted from the sleigh, and revealing her identity, proclaimed that she was come to seek protection of the regiment because she was being threatened with internment. And all in response protested devotion to "the daughter of the great Tsar," and she in her turn, raising the cross above her head,

cried: "Herewith do I swear to die for you! Do ye swear to do for me the same so long as there be no useless bloodshed!" Then, as the men crowded around her to kiss the cross, the single officer on duty in the barracks, who only now came running out to see what was the matter, was quietly seized by the conspirators and put under restraint.

Next, in procession, all made for the palace. On reaching the Admiralty Place Elizabeth declared that she would perform the rest of the journey on foot, but as soon as the soldiers saw her little feet sinking into the snow they exclaimed: "Matushka,¹ we shall not, in that manner, proceed fast enough," and two of them picked her up and carried her on their shoulders. At the palace Lestocq detached parties for the arrest of Munnich, Ostermann, Loewenwolde, and Golovkin in their houses, and also a party to go on ahead, knock at the palace gates as though they were "visiting rounds," and so procure entry for the rest. And that having successfully been done, the regent and her husband were ordered to be awakened, and brought downstairs with the infant Tsar. As soon as Elizabeth saw the child she exclaimed: "The poor innocent!" and took him into her arms and carried him out to the sleigh. The last act was a progress home along the now densely thronged Nevski Prospekt. Incidentally, some accounts say that the regent and her husband were awakened by Elizabeth personally. And certainly a print published at the time shows her bending over Anna, and the latter cowering back amongst the bed-clothes.

Next, of course, came reprisals and rewards, the usual foolish accusations, and the usual barbaric decrees. Munnich, accused of having worked to secure Biren's appointment as regent, when in reality he had done more than anyone else to set Russia free of that adventurer, was sentenced to be beheaded. Nikita Trubetskoi,

¹ Little mother.

official prosecutor in the case, a man who had served under the old Field-Marshal as commissariat chief during Anna's Turkish campaign, and, as such, contributed more than his share to the Field-Marshal's losses, asked the latter whether he looked upon himself as guilty. "I do," Munnich replied. "I do so because long ago I ought to have had you hanged." In Ostermann's case the charge was that he had involved Russia in useless and costly wars. He too was sentenced to be beheaded. In him Elizabeth lost a statesman who, though possessed of faults, also had brains, a sense of moral rectitude rare for the times, a superiority to his contemporaries in that he could not only conceive but carry through a foreign policy, a tireless energy in his adopted country's service, and an honesty which, that service over, left him practically a pauper. Into his shoes stepped ex-Chancellor Bestuzhev. And Bestuzhev at least laboured, according to his lights, to set Russia well before Europe. If he was venal, and always insisted upon his price, so too did Elizabeth's other political subordinates. To Loewenwolde, as grand chamberlain, a brother of Bestuzhev's, Michael, succeeded. Wrote Ambassador Mardeveld to Frederick II in February 1742:

Even the very coats and breeches and stockings and linen of Count Loewenwolde have now been apportioned unto chamberlains of the empress. Before they entered her service these same chamberlains were as naked as a hand. Two of the last-appointed four were lackeys once. One even was a groom.

Only one official promoted during the last reign escaped at least banishment. That official was Lacy, the Scotchman. He escaped through sheer presence of mind. When awakened on the night of the *coup d'état*, and asked to declare himself, he replied: "I am, of course, for the one in power."

After amusing herself awhile by keeping her victims in constant expectation of the agony of the scaffold Elizabeth commuted the death sentences to perpetual exile, and in pursuance of the decision had Munnich, Ostermann, Loewenwolde, Golovkin, and others dispatched to Siberia and elsewhere. Others, again, were given the *knut*. Then only the Brunswick family remained to be dealt with. And as the Brunswick family could not very well be flogged, and still less be beheaded, its members were sent to Riga in the first instance, and to Kholmogori in the second. There, in Kholmogori, Anna Leopoldovna survived until 1746, and her apoplectic old husband until 1766. Ten years earlier measures were taken also with young Ivan Antonovitch. That is to say, a sergeant of the Guards arrived one day and carried him off to Schlüsselberg.

In the profound changes of personnel of the superior administration which followed upon the accession of Elizabeth some observers have discerned the moment when Russia's national sense first awakened. But this is not so. The changes in question came rather of Elizabeth's and her entourage's personal likes (or dislikes). Instances are that at that period Devier was recalled from Okhotsk, whither Menshikov had banished him seventeen years earlier, and that Biren received a like recall from Pelim, and was permitted to take up residence in Yaroslav.

Then, to justify the *coup d'état* in the people's eyes, Elizabeth published a manifesto. But so ambiguously was the document worded as to satisfy nobody. And upon it there followed a second one, the famous manifesto of 28 November. This second manifesto set forth what Elizabeth declared to be her rights to the throne. Those rights, the manifesto said, derived from a will made by Catherine I. And the manifesto said it so clearly that popular perplexity thereafter remained impossible. According to the document, Catherine had by testament

nominated as her heirs—in the first instance the late Peter II; in the second instance, if he should have no issue, Anna, daughter of Peter the Great, and her posterity; and in the third Elizabeth and her posterity. True, the document added, Anna, Duchess of Holstein-Gotthorp, had on her death in 1728 left behind her a son, Peter Ulric; but that son had been born in Kiel, and brought up in the Protestant faith, and so stood debarred from the succession, in that Catherine's will had expressly ruled out non-Orthodox candidates.¹ Well, Elizabeth's right now appeared to stand incontestable—so long as people should conveniently forget that still there existed the poor young Ivan Antonovitch, her predecessor. As a matter of fact Elizabeth least of all persons found herself able to forget that existence. To the end of her life the obsession rode her that a conspiracy was being hatched for Ivan Antonovitch's restoration. And probably of the same cause, of, that is to say, her uncontrollable fear of dislodgment, came the iniquity known as the Lopukhin affair. That affair was as follows:

Amongst her ladies-in-waiting Elizabeth had a Madame Lopukhin, a lady of great beauty and grace. But eventually that beauty and grace aroused the empress's jealousy, and not less so as Madame's mother had been a sister of William Mons, of Peter the Great's wronger. On the other hand it should be added that Madame never did anything to conciliate the empress. Rather the contrary. And at last, though Elizabeth so loved to be exclusive in her dress that she would change her costume daily, there came a night when she entered the State ballroom with a rose in her hair, and found there Madame with a rose in hers. Instantly Elizabeth made the offender go upon her knees before her, sent for a pair of scissors, cut off Madame's rose

¹ Later, of course, Elizabeth made this Peter Ulric her heir, and he became Peter III.

and the lock of hair which was supporting it, and lastly administered to each of Madame's cheeks a vigorous slap. Then unconcernedly she fell to dancing. And something graver yet was to follow. It seems that until Loewenwolde had been dispatched to Siberia Madame Lopukhin had acted as his mistress: and now, growing disconsolate for want of the absent one, Madame took advantage of a visit which was about to be paid to Siberia on official business by an officer of her acquaintance to entrust that officer with a message for her lover, and also persuaded her friend Madame Bestughev (*née* Golovkin) to send, through the same means, a message to her brother, the ex-vice-chancellor. But though the contents of the messages were innocent enough in themselves, they did allow of a perversion of their sense when reported to the empress, and the latter at once had the two women arrested, and also Madame Lopukhin's husband and son. Then the four were put upon trial, and after a purely perfunctory hearing sentenced to be flogged, and to have their tongues cut out. When on 31 August, 1743, the moment of punishment arrived Madame Bestughev contrived, whilst being stripped for the flogging, to slip a diamond-studded cross into the executioner's hand, and so procure at least that the *knut* should merely graze her shoulders and the knife merely scratch her tongue. But when Madame Lopukhin's turn arrived she railed, fought, and bit the executioner's hand until he had to seize her by the throat. Then a dexterous turn of the wrist excised the wretched woman's tongue, and he held it up for the crowd to look at. Yet, fearful though the torment was, Madame survived it sufficiently long to accompany her husband to Siberia, and live with him there until, on his dying in 1745 from the after-effects of his frightful flagellation, permission to her—no longer the lovely Natalia of Peterburgan society—to return to Russia was granted.

Elizabeth divided her time principally between her

morganatic consort, Alexis Razumovski (whom Ivan Shuvalov ultimately supplanted), and card-play, dances, and masquerades—the two latter in order, first and foremost, to display the shapeliness of her legs. But though all this was done with luxury, glitter, and ostentation, there lay behind it not a scintilla of moral taste, and not a scintilla of real brain and sense. Russia, supposed now to be civilized, still lagged a full century behind Europe. The manners and morals of the *élite* of the provinces were worse still. Everywhere the upper classes lived a double life. The one life was kept for fête days. The other one was kept for workaday existence. In memoirs written by a Dolgoruki there occurs the following passage:

One day my grandfather went to Peterhof to call upon the Princess Golitzin, wife of the Field-Marshal. "Ah, my dear prince!" was her exclamation when he appeared. "*How* glad I am to see you! To-day it is raining, and I cannot go out, and my husband is from home, and I was feeling so perished of ennui as to be near to seeking amusement by having my servants flogged."

Also, in the palace which Peter the Great built at Peterhof there hung a list of rules for visiting courtiers, one of which read: "No man is to go to bed booted." Lastly, though most of the Guards officers of Catherine's, Anna's, and Elizabeth's times came of families which thought it *de rigueur* to drive about in a coach-and-four, the same officers could yet stoop to raise money for indulgence of their tastes through acceptance of bribes, and through sale or pledge of their serfs as though the latter had been immovable property. Besides, they could if they chose flog those serfs or consign them to Siberia. The less was anyone in a position to say them nay in that even the sovereign and her representatives did likewise.

Elizabeth could not legally nominate issue of hers

by Alexis Razumovski (usually known in Russia as "The Tsar by Night") to succeed her, since the union was morganatic; but as, at the same time, she wished to prevent the Brunswick family's possible restoration, she conceived the idea of having her sister Anna's son, Peter Ulric, fetched from Holstein and made her heir. Unfortunately, as that nephew had been born at Kiel, and reared, for the first thirteen years of his life, as a Protestant, and always taught to respect things Teutonic alone, he had become a typically gross, ignorant North German princelet, and Elizabeth was perfectly well aware, when she did what she did, that if ever he was to be moulded into a Romanov he must be converted to Orthodoxy and re-taught by Russian tutors. So, after having had him proclaimed a "grandson of Peter the Great" and docked of his second name, and received into the Orthodox Communion, she set him to acquire a smattering of the Russian language. But his idol remained Frederick II, as before. And to that idol eventually he sacrificed the most vital interests of his adopted country. He did so when Russia was participating in the Seven Years War. By that time she had beaten Frederick more than once, and acquired a considerable amount of German territory, so that reasonably enough she might have looked to dictate peace terms in Berlin. Yet what happened? What happened was that after prolonged parleys Tottleben, Russia's commander, agreed to a ransom of 1,700,000 *thalers*, and withdrew to Koepenick. However, Tottleben was but the instrument. The animating spirit was the grand duke. Nor did he, in the end, trouble to conceal the fact. Hence long before the empress died a, to quote the Chevalier d'Éon,¹ "hungry Bacchante

¹ Or Éon de Beaumont. A French diplomat sent by Louis XV, during 1762-4, on missions to St. Petersburg and London. A suspicion of betrayal of French secrets in London led to his being condemned to wear female dress. And this, again, led to

whose skin yet was sweating lechery," she must have realized indeed that for a Romanov she had given Russia but a Holsteiner-Gotthorper. Her demise took place on 4 January, 1762.

his sex being doubted. Later he became a fencing master in London, and died there in 1796. After his death a post-mortem examination set the question of sex at rest.

CHAPTER XI

CATHERINE II

ON 1 January, 1744, the Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst received from von Brummer, Grand Marshal of the Russian Court, the following letter:

I have been specially and expressly commanded by her Majesty the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna to inform you that it is the desire of that August Sovereign that your Highness do visit her Court at your very earliest convenience, and bring with you your eldest daughter.

As a further inducement to undertake the journey the letter had enclosed with it a draft for ten thousand roubles.

The message did not come wholly as a surprise. Ever since Elizabeth's *coup d'état* the princess had been doing her best to cultivate Elizabeth's good graces. And she had increased her efforts still further after Peter Ulric's summoning to St. Petersburg, and even had dispatched to the Russian Court a portrait of the eldest daughter referred to in von Brummer's letter. The real inspirer of the invitation, however, had been Frederick II. That sovereign had known that the empress was on the look out for a wife for Peter; and desiring at once to prevent Russia's pro-Austrian vice-chancellor, Bestuzhev, from having the empress procure the wife from Saxony, and to prevent his own sisters from "wedding with such a barbarous Court," and to ensure that the "victim" should nevertheless come of a German reigning family, he had in the end determined that, "of all princely maidens meet for marriage, the

Princess Sophia Frederika of Anhalt-Zerbst was the most suitable for furtherance of the interests of Prussia and Russia alike.”¹

Sophia at the time was fifteen years old. Of her life before that period we know only (1) that for governess she had had a Madame Gardel, a devotee of the *grand siècle* and its traditions, and for dancing master a certain Monsieur Laurent; (2) that, as most of the towns of northern Germany had then been full of refugees from revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the new philosophic school of France had formed close cultural ties with the region named, Sophia had found herself, both in her parents' house at Zerbst, and in the palace in Berlin, and in her father's house whilst he had been Governor of Stettin, surrounded with French associates and French ideas; and (3) that, as her mother too had been versed in the French tongue, the mother had given the daughter many readings from Madame Sévigné, Voltaire, and Montesquieu—but above all from Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois*, which Sophia, when become Catherine II, termed “the sovereign's own breviary.” Can we, then, wonder—cognizant of the foregoing facts only though we are—that ultimately the daughter came to be able to hold with Voltaire a correspondence couched in an idiom of an elegance and an originality equal to his own?

It was not long after her arrival in St. Petersburg before she realized that the splendour of the Russian Court covered mere sordid barbarism, primitive morality, and a non-European cast of thought. And this greatly shocked and hurt her. If people in her own country did not drink from golden cups and walk in brocade and velvet, at least they built stone houses, houses warranted to last, and not mere things of painted boardwork which fire could at any moment reduce to ashes. In Russia, too, doors would not shut, and window-frames did not

¹ This is a quotation from Frederick's memoirs.



CATHERINE II

Hachette et Cie

fit. "My rooms, on the one side," once she wrote, "regard the festering swamp of the Fontanka. On the other they regard a mean courtyard." Russian stoves, also, smoked persistently, and water never ceased to trickle down walls whereon pink cupids pursued their sport on a blue ground. The Court of St. Petersburg, in short, was a compound of magnificence and squalor, of refinement and savagery.

Naturally the princess's coming evoked anger in many and amazement in all, for until then the projected union between the heir to the throne and herself had been kept religiously a secret amongst the empress, von Brummer, Lestocq, and Mardeveld only. Especially was Vice-Chancellor Bestuzhev outraged at the matrimonial idea, for always he had hoped to see the grand duke betrothed to the Princess Mariana of Saxony, whereas now Lestocq and Mardeveld had won the day with their intrigues, and his own influence inevitably would diminish. In vain did Elizabeth tell him that a Protestant princess was more easily converted to Orthodoxy than a Catholic, and that the first requisite of all had been to choose a bride from a princely house at least not eminent enough either to influence Russia's policy later or to send to Russia a train of hangers-on bound to cause Court jealousy and popular resentment. Merely, by way of reply, Bestuzhev sought to move the spiritual authorities against the union, and have it declared tainted with the consanguinity of cousins. Then funds were apportioned in the right quarters by the other side, and the day was won. Clearly Chétardie, the French ambassador, was right when, in reporting the matter to his Government, he remarked that "in every country money without stint is the last resource, and the best." And Frederick II entered a note to much the same effect in his memoirs.

So, converted to Orthodoxy and renamed Catherine, the princess went through, on 21 August, 1745, the

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marriage ceremony arranged. Never did a worse-assorted couple stand on the throne's steps. The bridegroom was not only morally, mentally, and physically degenerate; he was so appallingly ugly that a contemporary wrote:

So greatly hath smallpox ravaged him that scarce now can he be recognized. His countenance is hideous, his stature diminished, and his body indescribably transformed. On Catherine's first meeting with him, she was unable, despite forewarnings, to refrain from shuddering, so uncomely did she perceive him to be. Aye, and she turned away her head, and grew so pale that, to give her daughter time to recover from the dismay, the princess-mother had perforce to throw herself into the grand duke's arms, and long hold him in her embrace.

And even this was not all. Peter, in addition, was underhand, ill-tempered, and so drunken and vicious as to be almost abnormal in those respects. Also, as his mentality was sheerly the mentality of a Prussian corporal (and he bequeathed it largely to his son Paul, and still more so to his grandson Nicholas), he took for his prime diversions mimic military exercises with pasteboard soldiers, "reviews" of his lackeys (clad in Prussian helmets for the purpose), regalement with salacious anecdotes by those lackeys, and interminable card parties. His married life he ruled in accordance with suggestions furnished him by his valet, an ex-sergeant of the Swedish army named Rumberg: and therefore his wife might never speak above a whisper in his presence, or cultivate independent tastes. Observation of these rules he did not hesitate to enforce, if need be, with physical violence. Catherine's memoirs tell of an occasion in particular when, on entering his study, she found him hanging a large rat and was informed, on her evincing astonishment, that the sentence was one of court-martial, since the rat had trespassed within a

pasteboard fortress and consumed two pasteboard sentries.

Such the man whom the egotism of some and the intrigues of others entrusted with the care of a clever, spirited girl of fifteen! Of course, Catherine herself later indulged in countless amours: but even so her cool, severely practical intellect always contrived to retain the upper hand, and the laxity of her morals was never allowed to impair the capacity of her rule. Incidentally it has often been debated whether Paul really was the father of the child which afterwards became the Emperor Paul. Some have averred Paul's father to have been rather, Saltykov, but the fact remains that, much as Catherine was attached for a while to the latter, and certain though it is that Peter suffered from the physical impediment which circumcision alone can remove, Paul resembled, not Saltykov, but Peter in his ugliness and his imbecility alike. Let us then surmise no more than that the ground was prepared for the official husband by the unofficial—as indeed was generally said at the time.

When the Seven Years War broke out neither Catherine nor Bestuzhev (Catherine's friend now that he sensed that she would one day be his empress) could prevent Elizabeth from sending eighty thousand men to vanquish Frederick and England.¹ But in the campaign the Russian commander, Apraxin, adopted tactics so extraordinary as to necessitate his recall and an inquiry: with the result that Catherine was found to have been corresponding with Bestuzhev and Apraxin to Russia's detriment.² On the empress discovering

¹ According to some authorities, Elizabeth's motive was pique at remarks of Frederick's at her expense. According to others Bestuzhev engineered the move, through fear of Prussia's growing power.

² Catherine's treason had taken the form of suggesting to Frederick a bribing of the Russian commander to delay his forces' advance.

this she determined at first to send Catherine back to her own country, but Catherine so vigorously assumed the offensive when accused, that she ended by consolidating rather than weakening her position, and only Bestuzhev was disgraced and exiled.

Thrown now more than ever upon her own resources, Catherine devoted fresh study to the great writers of France. Not that she did not now feel certain of becoming ruler of her adopted country. And to that end she meant to forget her German origin completely, and become wholly a Slav. That was why she said to the Court physicians on one occasion: "Drain me, I pray you, of my last drop of German blood, and leave there nought save what is Russian." Punctiliously, in the same connection, she practised the rites of the Orthodox Church, and listened to the Metropolitan Platon with attention. The ultimate result was retention of marks of her Teutonic source only as regards ceaseless industry, the methodical instinct, an adaptability to foreign ideas, and a taste for family life which at least led her in the end to undertake supervision of her grandsons' education. At this period too she set down daily her impressions and ideas—highly enlightened maxims on the subject of truth, justice, liberty, reason, and the like. Probably she was sincere at the moment. And quite possibly she was sincere at the time when she came to compose her *Nakaz*, or Instruction, for the benefit of a legislative commission of her appointment, even though the *Nakaz* consisted mostly of borrowings from Montesquieu and Beccaria. But subsequently the French Revolution interpreted her dreams and aspirations too literally for her taste, and that brought her to a halt in the connection named, and led her to consign such ideas to the limbo of philanthropical utopias. In reality her nature was the antithesis of liberal. More: it was the antithesis of humanitarian-liberal. Yet, a thoroughgoing absolutist at heart, she never ceased to

strive to make Europe think that she was Europe's "Northern Semiramis."

On the death of the Empress Elizabeth on 28 December, 1761, Peter at once countermanded the military operations against Prussia, and even placed his forces at Prussia's disposal. This saved the latter from what would certainly have ended in disaster, and at the same time deprived the coalition of that union's main support. Did Peter care a jot about Russia and her given word? Not he! All that he wanted was to make of the Russian Empire a German province. Also, as one innately Protestant and only officially Orthodox, he set about doing what he could to degrade Russia's clergy, and closed most of their churches. Next he and his Prætorian Guard of fifteen hundred Holsteiners began upon a process of Prussianizing Russia's military forces. Lastly he suggested that Denmark should be forced to restore to his patrimony of Holstein that patrimony's former portion of Schleswig. And then even his two liberal measures, the liberal measures represented by suppression of Elizabeth's "Secret Chancellory" and abrogation of the Petrine law compelling all nobles to perform military or civilian service, did not prevent the Russian people from losing patience.

Before Elizabeth died even she came to feel thunderstruck at Peter's want of ability. And it is said that ideas of hers for the situation's remedying were firstly that Peter's infant son Paul should be proclaimed heir, and Catherine regent, and secondly that Catherine, rather, should be proclaimed: but at all events these projects never attained fulfilment. Later, when Peter had come to reign, he divined so little the conspiracies that were afoot at Court, in the Senate, and amongst the troops that actually he went on to propose a divorce of Catherine and her replacement with his mistress, Elizabeth Vorontzov. Catherine's closest intimates amongst the plotters on her behalf were three brothers

named Orlov (one of them, Grigorii, was her lover as well), Prince Bariatinski, and an officer named Passek: and these five controlled the plot's main threads, and others with less responsibility upon them worked out the details. Notable amongst these last was the empress's bosom friend Princess Dashkov, another mistress of Grigorii's. Then suddenly the authorities placed Passek under arrest, and this forced Catherine and her party to immediate action. Peter, at the time, was residing at Oranienbaum, and Catherine at "Mon-plaisir," her villa near Peterhof; and at five o'clock on the morning of 9 July, 1762, there set forth for the capital a band consisting of the empress, the Orlovs, and two attendants. As soon as they reached the city they called out the three corps of Guards; and then they sent some Horse Guards to arrest the commandant of that regiment, George, Duke of Holstein, the emperor's uncle, and at the same time were joined by some line detachments which had been on the point of starting for the German front. Lastly all proceeded to the cathedral of Kazan, and, after a ceremony there, to the Winter Palace. From the palace Admiral Talitzin was dispatched to make sure that the garrison of Kronstadt could be relied upon, and then Catherine composed proclamations to the people and the army, and that done, borrowed a horse and the uniform of an hussar officer, placed herself at the head of the *cortège* (made up of some twenty thousand men, with a few pieces of cannon), and returned to Peterhof, whither the emperor too was to arrive at about that hour from Oranienbaum. But meanwhile Peter had received the news from the capital, and embarked in his yacht. By that means he sought to make Kronstadt, but the garrison threatened to fire upon the party if it attempted a landing, and Peter had no choice but to return to Oranienbaum. There eventually he, despite protests from brave old Munnich and the Holsteiner bodyguard, abdicated. He did so,

Frederick II's memoirs state, "as meekly as a child when bidden to go to bed."

That accomplished, the empress had him put into a coach with windows closely blinded, and removed to Peterhof under the escort of a young cavalry officer named Grigorii Potemkin. And next day he was taken from Peterhof to his villa at Roptcha, twenty-seven *verss* from St. Petersburg, and finally committed to the guardianship of Alexis Orlov and three others, "pending a commodious and fitting lodgment at Schlüsselburg."

The next event was that, first of all to the various embassies, and then to the people, there was issued a note. The note stated that the emperor had only been resident for a few days at Roptcha when, on 18 July, he had succumbed to a sudden seizure of "hæmorrhoidal colic." True, no one believed the statement, but it was not until Catherine herself was dead that the facts became known in their entirety. The affair was domestic rather than State. Catherine originally meant to have Peter shut up in Schlüsselburg, but the idea had to be abandoned because the fortress already contained a prisoner of the sort, the unfortunate young Ivan Antonovitch, and it would scarcely have been advisable to add a second one. But as, on the other hand, it was impossible to leave Peter permanently at Roptcha, almost at the capital's very gates, and equally impossible to return him to Holstein, the Orlovs and others determined to adopt another plan altogether. So on the fifth day after Peter's arrival at Roptcha the conspirators seized Rumberg, the emperor's valet, thrust him into a closed vehicle, and dispatched the vehicle somewhere—it is not known where. Then the same day, at six o'clock in the evening, Catherine received from Alexis Orlov the following hastily, disjointedly written note:

Matushka, our august and most gracious Sovereign! How shall I explain to you, make clear to you, what hath

just befallen? Oh, that you will refuse to believe your faithful servant I know well. But yet will I tell you, as in the presence of God, that which is the truth. Matushka! Even if I were now to be confronted with death, I could not say that I know just how the affair came about. Pardon us, though, or all of us are lost! Matushka, *he* no longer lives. None of us desired that—indeed, how could any one of us have lifted a hand against his Sovereign? Oh, the calamity that hath happened! This day did he suddenly dispute at table with Prince Fedor Bariatinski, and even before we could part them he was no more. It was as though none of us knew what we were doing. All of us, unto the last of us, are guilty, and all of us should be punished if any one be. But pity me, if only for my brother's sake! Now have I confessed all. There remaineth no need of further inquiry. Oh, do thou pardon us! Or, if thou canst not, then command that at least our end may be speedy! We have no more joy in the world. All of us have merited thine anger. Utterly is our spirit fled.

When Catherine had read the note (a communication scribbled upon a mere scrap of packing-paper) she said to Princess Dashkov: "Afflicted, cast down, indeed am I by the death!"

Then she had a little casket brought to her. And as she placed the confession of the regicide within the casket and turned the key, she added:

"No person must read this until I too be dead. Now—forward! Never must I be suspected!"

At thirty-three, therefore, Catherine became autocrat sovereign of Russia. Stoutly she tackled the task. Ever, she tells us, she had to buoy her up the ambition to equal, if not to surpass, the record of Peter the Great. Well, every detail in her vast empire now stood coated over with the verdigris of preceding reigns, and called for her attention. First had the matter of the war to be liquidated. So Catherine straightway recalled the army which Elizabeth had sent for Frederick's destruction, and Peter III had retained for Frederick's

maintenance. And next Catherine sent the Danish king, on Denmark again threatening to become troublesome over Holstein, a note couched in the terms of one able to dispose of four hundred thousand men. And then, as Russia's channels of communication with France had been, in addition to the ordinary diplomatic channels, the intermediary of such irregular diplomatists as the Chevalier d'Éon, Catherine summarily terminated the "secret" correspondence, and so ended a system less supplementing than unnecessarily exceeding the diplomacy of State. Again, Catherine signified to England, then preoccupied with revolutionary troubles and temporarily withdrawn from confronting Russia's army in Germany, that she intended for the future to remain neutral in the current struggle—and thereby doubtless afforded England much relief. Yet no sooner did England commission her ambassador to arrange an Anglo-Russian commercial treaty than she, England, and her City of London merchants found themselves confronted with a match in Nikita Panin and his wideawake sovereign. Next there came a letter from Prince Stanislaus Poniatowski, the brilliant young Polish noble, praying Catherine to restore him to a place by her side: but the day for that was past now—the Orlov brothers had long ago filled the vacancy, and were jealous spirits to boot, and—— Well, as Catherine saw no other means of keeping Stanislaus out of harm's way, she just set him upon the Polish throne. Again, as all reasons to fear Bestuzhev as an enemy now were dissipated, Catherine recalled him, and whilst still keeping him debarred from active participation in State affairs, restored him his titles and dignities. It is said, too, that at about this time she weighed the notion of marrying Ivan Antonovitch, Schlüsselburg's captive, as a means of rendering herself impregnable against any attempt to dispute her ruling right: but we know nothing tangible about that beyond that at this

period she paid the poor moribund and semi-imbecile *miserable* at least one visit. His ending came about through a conspiracy hatched by an officer named Mirovitch. Mirovitch, with a view to the ex-monarch's liberation and proclamation, concocted a "manifesto" of sorts, and having shown it to the men of the fortress guard, obtained those men's agreement to attack the governor and jailers. But when they had successfully done that, and entered the ex-emperor's cell, they found there a corpse only, for at once the jailers had, in accordance with orders designed to meet such an eventuality, orders issued it seems on the captive's first incarceration, put their prisoner to death. In due course Mirovitch was tried and executed, and as regards the ex-Tsar, Catherine wrote to Panin:

Let *him*, the prisoner without a name, be buried at Schlüsselburg after a Christian fashion, but without stir, for I would not have the tidings reach the capital yet.

Besides arranging for her love affairs to march in step with the affairs of the State, Catherine corresponded extensively with leading *littérateurs* of Germany and France. Also, Russia's defects of manners, customs, and legislation, added to the administrative anarchy entrenched in Russia's remoter localities, ended in her composing her famous *Nakaz* to a legislative commission designed to frame a new *Ulozhenie*, or Code of Laws. The unfortunate part was that the commission failed to rise to the *Nakaz's* "modernism" of spirit. The document, in very truth, had in it maxims causing the prudent Panin to remark: "They are such as might shatter walls!" So next, abandoning the field of legislation, Catherine had to go on to finance, and was not only the first ruler of Russia to tax the Church's property, but also the first to effect reforms of excise, and to found both a State bank of issue and a private society for the study of economics. Again, it was she who

introduced potato culture into Russia, in addition to inviting foreign colonists, and especially German colonists, to settle in the country, and building towns to perpetuate by their names (Ekaterinburg, Ekaterinoslav, and so forth) her own, and instituting a college of physicians, and opening new hospitals, and setting the fashion of inoculation by undergoing the operation in person. Also, in 1775, she divided the country into fifty new governments, provinces, which in each case had their separate legal and fiscal institutions; she organized a cadastral survey of the country; she divided the government of Little Russia into two; she suppressed the office of *hetman*, *ataman*; she gave the Cossack regiments a new organization for disciplinary and administrative purposes; she regularized the position of the *dvorianstvo* by conferring upon that class a charter of local assembly under *dvorianin* "marshals"; and she restored to the *miestchanstvo*, the middle or professional-commercial class, the urban-municipal machinery which it had formerly possessed. Yet, with all that, she did nothing whatsoever for the bulk of the population, for the peasantry.

As regards education, her original idea was to begin it with institutions for infants, and to proceed thence to country town schools, and to end up with provincial-urban academies added to five universities (inclusive of the University of Moscow, already existent). But in the result the necessary tutorial personnel failed to be secured, and she had to fall back upon founding a few secondary establishments and an academy for the advancement of Russian literature—in which latter enterprise she was helped considerably by her friend Princess Dashkov. As a matter of fact no one on earth could have achieved far-reaching reforms in Russia of the eighteenth century. Even as things were the clergy blamed Catherine for what she compelled them to pay, and the more old-fashioned Muscovites blamed her for

her Western innovations, and the serfs blamed her for her omission to accord them emancipation, and the *Raskolniks* blamed her for taxing them twice as much as anyone else, and the Cossacks blamed her for curtailing their ancient liberties.

In connection with the latter section of the population the year 1793 saw an exceptional amount of unrest spread in the Cossack community of the Lower Ural. And when those Cossacks were joined by a Cossack of the Don named Emelian Pugachev they came out openly. Pugachev previously had served both in the Prussian campaign and in the Turkish, been wounded, and invalided home. Thence, after a while, he had migrated to the Lower Ural, joined the locality's malcontent Cossack chiefs and *Raskolniks*, and conceived the idea of giving himself out to be a Peter III who, after escaping his guardians at Roptcha, and going to live in Turkey and Egypt, was now come to recover his rights. True, the Cossack chiefs gave the story no credence at all, but they saw that they could use him, and very soon he had raised the whole population of the Lower Volga and enlisted sufficient vagabonds, runaway serfs, Bashkirs, Khirzhizes, and Kalmuks to defeat the few sorry troops sent against him by the local authorities, to capture some Volgan towns, and finally to establish himself in Orenburg. Then, as "Tsar," he promised to pay the slayers of each landowner a hundred roubles, and the sackers of each estate a thousand, and to confer the rank of "general" upon anyone causing ten landowners to be slain, or ten estates to be sacked. He set up at Orenburg, too, a "court" complete with guards of honour," "commissions," "receptions," "audiences," and the rest, and fitted out the "grand *salon*" of his "palace" with a portrait of the Tsarevitch Paul, and, if company was present, displayed towards the portrait "paternal tenderness." Another ceremony of his was to end a "reception" by departing thence borne upon

the shoulders of the Cossack women who formed his harem. At other times he would, to bell-rings and a firing of guns, mount a horse and "review" his "Imperial army" (which for that matter did indeed come by the close of 1773 to number fully fifteen thousand, and to have eighty mortars attached to its strength). And his evenings he spent in wine, song, and dance. Just, however, before the opening of 1774 he had to retreat before General Bibikov. And, but for the fact that Bibikov suddenly expired of fatigues involved by the campaign, he, Pugachev, would never have regained his influence. As it was he then turned about, again ascended the Volga, and captured Kazan. There his success ended. Meiklesohn, the late Bibikov's second-in-command, now barred the rest of his road to Moscow, and being routed, he fled down the river, and being routed a second time when Suvorov arrived to take over direction of the Government troops, shut himself up in the town of Uralsk. There, eventually, some of the very Cossacks who recently had carried him in triumph on a shield bound him hand and foot, and made him surrender. Heavily manacled in a sort of cage, Pugachev was conveyed thence to Moscow for flagellation and decapitation. Strangely enough, however, the executioner forgot the first item of the sentence, and beheading the prisoner at once, found himself left with nothing but a decapitated corpse to flog. For the rest, the rising was "liquidated" with the usual *knut*-ings and hangings. Quite possibly these details were not reported to Catherine. It will be remembered that on her accession she had expressed herself to her subjects as resolved "to surpass my every predecessor in clemency and wisdom and maternal tenderness and the virtues in general."

Two years earlier she began to tire of the brothers Orlov, and above all of the vain and exacting Grigorii. But she was still casting about for a means of getting

rid of him when he saved her the trouble by starting a liaison with his cousin, Catherine Zinoviev, and being forced to flee abroad in case a scandal should result. When he returned he married the cousin in legal form, but the ecclesiastical authorities, impugning the marriage on the ground of consanguinity, referred the matter to the Privy Council, and the Privy Council sentenced husband and wife to internment, and only Catherine's intervention procured alteration of the sentence to permission to proceed to Switzerland. There the wife died of consumption in 1783, and Grigorii himself died immediately after his return to Russia, of an affection of the brain.

Alexis Orlov too was got rid of for a while, not only through being sent upon naval service in the Turkish campaign, but also through the following. It happened that for some time past an adventuress calling herself variously "the Princess Tarakhanov" and "the Princess Vladimirski" had been touring Europe as a daughter born of the late Empress Elizabeth'smorganatic union with Razumovski, and seeking to obtain money and other aids towards asserting her "rights," and ousting Catherine from the throne. The woman visited Venice and several other European capitals, and finally, after being shipwrecked off Ragusa whilst proceeding to wait upon the Sultan at Constantinople, found for herself a *pied-à-terre* at Leghorn. Now, three years earlier a Russian squadron had, whilst nominally commanded by Alexis Orlov, but in reality commanded by the English Admiral Samuel Greig, defeated the Turkish fleet off Chesmé, on the coast of Asia Minor. And inasmuch as Catherine remembered that Alexis and his ships were still in the Mediterranean, she bade him "lay hold upon that adventuress's person." Alexis, therefore, on the pretext of "desiring to salute Elizabeth's daughter," put in at Leghorn, paid violent court to the lady, and finished up by asking her to

become his wife. True, the adventuress was not a person born yesterday, but for all that she swallowed the bait, and the couple were "married," with a disguised naval officer for "priest." The lady discovered that, the "marriage" notwithstanding, she was not "Countess Orlov" only when there closed behind her the door of a cell in the Petropavlovski Fortress. Next year she was delivered of a stillborn son. Yet never to the day of her death did she reveal what her true identity was—even to the priest who ministered to her.

The death, of course, relieved Catherine vastly, for though the adventuress had threatened less danger than had "the prisoner without a name" and Pugachev, it had been inadvisable to have European opinion constantly requested on the matter of Catherine's rights. Always she set great store by European opinion. Indeed a desire to stand well in Europe's eyes probably it was that led her strongly to support Diderot's *Encyclopédie* when its publication was proscribed in Paris, and to avow great admiration also for the *Pensées Philosophiques* when the French Parliament burnt it, and to purchase Diderot's library, and then let him enjoy the use of its contents for the rest of his lifetime, and to entertain him for a month in St. Petersburg, and to correspond with Voltaire, and to show great friendliness to Baron Grimm, and make him practically her literary ambassador in Paris, and lastly to display a preference over all other visiting foreigners of note for Falconet the sculptor. Falconet it was whom she commissioned to render Peter the Great and herself securely famous through a gigantic equestrian statue of the former superscribed: "Petro Primo, Catherina Secunda," and thereby, with dignified, laconic eloquence, to suppress a whole page of history's book.

A task especially forcing Catherine to confront it was accomplishment of a final geographical unification of the empire. And another such task was final assurance

of the succession to the throne. The former she delegated to the immense (albeit slightly undisciplined) creative talent of Grigorii Potemkin. The latter she reserved to herself.

Potemkin, a member of an old family of Central Russia, was educated at the University of Moscow, but adopted a military career. The first cause of his attracting Catherine's notice was a dispute which he had with Alexis Orlov, when his opponent put out an eye of his with a billiard cue, so that ever afterwards Catherine called him "my Cyclops." Handsome, clever, bold, and ambitious, he soon advanced in the imperial favour. Nor was that favour ever refused him because of absences and vagaries—which were many. Nor was his professional career at any time impaired by his disability of sight. But after a long-continued rôle as lover, varied with periodical withdrawals into a monastery for "repentance," he dropped that rôle in favour of the military one exclusively, and, with Dolgoruki, Suvorov, and Rumiantsev, waged many campaigns, and eventually helped to make Russia mistress of the Crimea. That done, he proposed an imperial tour of the conquered territory, and Catherine and he set forth towards the close of the year 1780, passed through White Russia, interviewed Joseph II of Austria (traveling as "Count Falkenstein") at Mogilev, visited Kiev, toured the Ukraine's five new provinces, and so reached Bakhtchi Sarai, the splendid ex-capital of the Crimean khans. And everywhere the progress was a succession of fêtes, triumphal arches, artillery salvos, pageants, bell-ringing, pyrotechnical displays, illuminations, shows, banquets, balls, and masquerades. Yet business did occasionally alternate with pleasure, as when Catherine propounded to Joseph II her views on a division of Europe even as Poland had been, and was about to be, divided (the first partition had taken place eight years earlier, and the second was in the air). Catherine

showed herself not ungenerous. Let Austria, she said, leave her Constantinople, and then Austria might take Rome instead. Yes, already Catherine saw the flag of Russia floating over the Bosphorus! Let Austria, with that flag there, do what she liked with her own flag on the Capitol! The interview marked a change of Russian policy in Europe. Thenceforth Russia drew away from Prussia, and approached Austria.

Then Catherine began to age. For some time past her *grandes amours* with lovers like Saltykov and Potemkin had yielded to one-night affairs with Lanskoï, Alexander Vasil'tchikov, Peter Zavadovski, Zuitch, Korsakov, Yermolov, Dmitriev-Mamonov, Platon Zubov, and so forth. And even of these the last-named alone had had the necessary superiority of cunning and persistency, to hold his place and profit thence. But the realization that old age was drawing on led her the more to cast about for suitable future occupants of the throne.

True, there was Paul, her son, to become her successor in the natural order, but he might not live to do so, and in any case she had little love for him because of his manifest resemblance to his father. The more curious a freak of fate, therefore, does it seem that in the end the relatives of hers to whom all her affection became devoted were that son's two eldest issue, the Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine. Already, in 1762, when she had become empress independently, she had sought to remove Paul out of Panin's hands (for her views as to the upbringing of the future ruler of an empire were very strict, and Panin scarcely possessed much pedagogic talent) by offering d'Alembert a hundred thousand livres, and ambassadorial immunity, and so on, if in return he would come from France and fill the vacant tutorial position: but twice the seductive invitation had been declined. Of course, to Catherine herself

d'Alembert had couched the refusal only in the most courteous of terms, but to Voltaire privately he had written: "You see, I suffer from hæmorrhoids. And in Russia, it seems, hæmorrhoids can be *serious*. And, for my part, I wish to endure my posterior *in security*,"—an obvious reference to the wording of the famous State Note of July 1762, the Note which had attributed Peter III's demise to "hæmorrhoidal colic." So, discouraged with this rebuff, Catherine had in the end left Paul under Panin's care. Perhaps she had found this course the more easy to adopt because by then her maternal instinct must have become largely atrophied. But when Paul was vouchsafed issue through his second marriage,¹ and the succession thereby made secure, she after a while separated the two elder boys from their parents, and personally undertook their upbringing.

Her first step in this regard was to give them (they were aged six and four respectively) Saltykov for *gouverneur*, and Charles La Harpe, a Swiss who, after graduating in philosophy at Geneva and in law at Tübingen, had been recommended to Catherine's good graces by Baron Grimm,² for moral preceptor. Yet La Harpe's instructions influenced—at least to any notable degree—only the eldest boy, Alexander.

Catherine, during the last year of her life, a Catherine resting upon her laurels, must have considered that she had much to look back upon. For during her reign the Turkish Empire had entered upon its decline; Poland had been reft asunder; Sweden had become reduced to a third-class power; Rome had been forced to pay Russia attention; Frederick had come to do Russia's

¹ Paul's first consort was the Princess Augusta of Hesse-Darmstadt. By her he had no issue. His second consort was the Princess Dorothea Sophia of Wurtemberg. By her he had four sons and five daughters.

² A German *littérateur*, *Encyclopédiste*, and diplomat who, late in life, became Catherine's Minister to Hamburg.

bidding; most of Germany's princely courts had fallen under Russian influence; and every one of Russia's rivals save France (and France also the genius of Suvorov was destined yet to subdue) had yielded her submission. At the same time, whilst Catherine had hung the churches of St. Petersburg with battle trophies taken from Poland, Sweden, and Turkey, and whilst she had laid the ghost of outbreaks of the type of the Pugachev rebellion, and whilst she had put to silence Kniazhin, Radistchev, and Novikov,¹ she was leaving Russia as much a be-tinselled stage setting as the Russia which originally had moved her to scorn—a Russia masking squalor, luxury, vice, moral and material abasement, non-solidarity, and non-concentration. No wonder that in her later days Catherine's popularity went no farther than court circles, or at all events than the confines of the capital. For by now the country stood sickened of military conquests which in no way conferred popular benefit, but on the contrary burdened in ever-increasing degree the annual budgets, and drained the national vitality. And sickened, too, did the country stand of Court follies which exhausted the treasury, and of Court favourites who behaved with the extravagance and capriciousness of satraps.

Catherine died on 17 November, 1796, aged sixty-seven. The cause of death was congestion of the brain. And after her death Paul opened the casket containing the note hastily scribbled by Alexis Orlov. He read the note. Then turning to Bezborodko he said: "Thank God that my at any time small doubts as to that matter now stand dispelled!" Then he had his father's remains exhumed from the burial-ground of the monastery of Saint Alexander Nevski, and borne upon the same bier

¹ Writers who severely, but justly, criticized her for her neglect of the masses. Radistchev she exiled, and Novikov she imprisoned.

as Catherine's to where there rests near Peter the Great Elizabeth the Handsome.¹

¹ That is to say, the Church of Saints Peter and Paul attached to the Petropavlovski Fortress of St. Petersburg, the burial-place of Russia's sovereigns (with the exception of young Peter II, who died at Moscow) since the time of Peter the Great. Previously, beginning with Ivan Kalita, they had been buried at Moscow, in the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel, one of the churches within the Kremlin.

CHAPTER XII

THE EMPEROR PAUL

PAUL became emperor after thirty-five humiliating years of waiting for the throne. And those years were not years of apprenticeship to governance, but years of stagnation, exclusion from State work of any sort whatever, and endurance of insult from Potemkin and other Court favourites. Nor had Paul, during this time, even domestic happiness for a solace, since his first wife, the vain and frivolous Princess Augusta of Hesse-Darmstadt, played him false (he learnt the fact beyond a doubt when she was dead, and he was handed a bundle of letters of hers to Andrew Razumovski, the man whom of all others he had believed to be his friend): and though at first his second union (when his wife was the Princess Sophia of Wurtemberg—Maria Fedorovna after that she had entered the Orthodox Communion) brought him some little happiness, that could not last—the difference of character between husband and wife, accentuated by intrigue, was too great.

All his contemporaries agreed that Paul was a strange mixture of cruelty and magnanimity, meanness and generosity, gross sensuality and profound mysticism; so that we see in him yet another of the unbalanced rulers of whom Russia has proved so prolific. One reason may have been injury done to his organism by the excessive genetical activity of a mother who used to say in jest that Etna and Vesuvius were her cousins. A particularly good picture of Paul's outward and inner man is given us by Princess Daria Lieven, who knew Paul from early boyhood. She says that ordinarily

he was of mild and even attractive bearing, but that suddenly he would become "terrifying beyond description," and issue commands, and commit acts, "at once violent, extreme, grotesque, extravagant, and sinister." This she attributes, as do most of Paul's contemporaries, to sudden access to power as autocrat sovereign working upon latent moral germs.¹

This accession to power so overthrew Paul's mental equilibrium, so dazzled and intoxicated him, that self-control went by the board. Innately mystical of bent, he interpreted his power as Heaven's express licence to work for that power's extension, not only over all Russia but over the whole universe. For he argued that God alone could have given such power as his to a being fashioned in man's image, and that therefore that power was not of human origin. This sentiment he expressed with particular emphasis in his pompous, ornate order of coronation, when, vested in ermine and cloth-of-gold and having about his shoulders the scarlet dalmatic of the Byzantine Cæsars, he approached the Holy Table, was anointed with the holy oils, placed the crown upon his head with his own hand, placed a coronet upon the head of his consort, and laid upon the high altar, and committed permanently to the care of the spiritual authorities, certain important legislative Acts—in particular an Act entitled "An Ordinance for Regulation henceforth of the Imperial Succession," enacting that from that time onward no female should be competent to wield the Russian supreme power, and that the sovereign should assume the title of "Head of the Church," and that in perpetuity the clergy should commemorate him and his family whenever saying or singing the Divine Offices, and that at all times the Tsar

¹ He is said to have been painfully conscious of his unpleasing exterior, and made it a reason for having the sovereign's likeness on the coinage replaced with the two-headed eagle which that coinage has ever since borne.

should be authorized to enter the "Royal Gate," to pass thence to the *Ikonostasis*, to pass thence, again, to the sanctuary and the high altar, to lift the chalice and the paten from the Holy Table, and finally to communicate to himself the Elements without the intervention of a priest.

Another, but a different, result of Paul's belief in the absoluteness of his power was not infrequent enactment of ordinances sheerly farcical. For example, on the ground that "blouses made the French Revolution" he forbade altogether the wearing of those articles of attire. The same with regard to long hair and short *kaftans*. But when he commanded that all persons in vehicles which chanced to meet his own should forthwith alight and stand in a profoundly humble attitude until he was gone by, so many persons—even fashionable ladies—had to be hurried off to prison because of tardiness of compliance that St. Petersburg's streets came to resemble a desert when the emperor was due to take his customary drive.

Like his father, Paul was a great admirer of Frederick II, and such a militarist fanatic as to force upon the Russian army Prussia's peruke, three-cornered hat, uniform, daily "Platz parade," and a huge amount of vexatious discipline. But as Paul also gave the soldiers largess, and always showed kindness to children, he cannot have been wholly lacking in good nature. Also, as he disliked luxury, a great many court functions and festivities were done away with, and so were the Winter Palace's great candelabra—from that time onward Paul remained content with candlesticks. For routine he rose daily at four or five o'clock, transacted business of State until nine, inspected public institutions with one of his sons until half-past ten, reviewed guards, or else did more business of State, until half-past one, dined and drank coffee until four, received ministers until seven, and brought the day to a close at nine.

At the time of his accession Russia was just issuing from victorious wars which had cost the country much blood and money. Paul made his first step the cancellation of further levies, termination of the struggle with Persia,¹ and a declaration to the friendly European Powers that in principle he was in favour of general peace. However, in spite of this, he was soon forced to resume a policy fully as bellicose as that of his predecessors. England and Austria sought his help because he was powerful, and the Pope confided in him about the doings of the French Directory in Italy. Finally Russia found herself drawn into an anti-French coalition—the factor most weighing down the scales in this direction, in Paul's eyes, being seizure of Malta by Bonaparte. For always Paul had been a fanatical admirer of the Knights of Saint John, and now, as the Order stood an outcast from its home, he extended it a hand without in the least perceiving the paradox involved in an Orthodox sovereign patronizing military monk-servitors of the Roman Church, but looking only to the circumstance that his beloved Chevaliers were wanderers upon the face of the earth. For a like reason had he already awarded Louis XVIII asylum at Mitau, with a treasury allowance of two hundred thousand roubles, and permitted Condé and his army to encamp in Volhynia. Having sent, then, both the Knights and the Pope word to make St. Petersburg their permanent seat of residence, he joined England, Austria, Turkey, and Naples against France, and contributed men and resources towards operations in Holland, Switzerland, and Upper Italy. In the latter Suvorov soon stripped the French of the cis-Alpine republics, but "my Italian prince," to quote Paul's term, then fell out with his Austrian colleagues, and Massena was enabled thereby to turn the tables with a crushing defeat of Korsakov in Switzerland. True,

¹ Over possession of Georgia.

Suvorov's subsequent withdrawal across the Alps was a masterly movement, but it could not avert the rupture between Russia and her allies which had become inevitable: whilst England's capture of Malta from the French at about the same time rendered things no better.

Two years earlier the Knights had accepted Paul's invitation to establish a priory in St. Petersburg. Now they renounced the authority of their grand master, Ferdinand of Hompesch, because of alleged anterior dealings with Bonaparte, and offered the grand mastership to, instead, Paul himself. This dignity he of course accepted, and upon that the Knights made it their business to surround his installation with the utmost possible measure of the pomp and archaic ritual which they knew him to appreciate. And in return he founded a priory solely for Russian Knights of the Order, and also had the Maltese cross quartered with the imperial arms, and the Order's flag formally unfurled from a tower of the Admiralty Building to a salute of thirty-three guns. Unfortunately it still remained to restore the Order to its island stronghold. And great indeed was the wrath of Paul when the English not only requested certain conditions to be observed if that were done, but informed him that the island was going to remain English property for good. The emperor's pro-English sympathies disappeared as by magic. In a trice he became a devotee of Napoleon and Napoleonism. His first step was to bid Louis XVIII leave Courland, and the English ambassador, Whitworth, leave Russia. His next (in January 1801) was to join an anti-English-Swedish-Danish-Prussian "league of armed neutrality." And even this was not enough to humiliate England. He adopted the same scheme for an invasion of India as Catherine had once considered at the instance of a French adventurer, named Ginier. Characteristically, too, he set about it in sheer

neglect of such elementary considerations as reconnaissances beforehand, provision of commissariat, provision of fodder, provision for sick and wounded, and possible outcome of traversing unmapped plateaus in mid-winter. Rather, he, on 12 January, 1801, dispatched twenty-two thousand Don Cossacks and twenty-four mortars and field pieces just, in general, eastward—their instructions were to set out and march, by any possible sort of means, towards the quarter of the world where there flows the river Ganges. So insane was the project as to lead many to suppose that the real aim was to send those twenty-two thousand members of the Cossack male population to certain destruction, and so weaken the remainder in their agitation for restored liberties. But three months later Alexander ascended the throne, and he at once had the force commanded to execute a right-about turn.

Paul's last two years were a veritable nightmare for all. From a letter which Elizabeth of Baden, consort of the future Alexander I, wrote home to her mother we gain a peculiarly graphic idea of Paul's then whims and cruelties. As a typical example, he once, because he found the soup at dinner not wholly to his taste, had the officer in charge of the imperial kitchens brought into the room, and belaboured with a cudgel specially selected from others for the purpose. And the grand duchess concludes by saying: "He desires to be feared far more than he desires to be loved. And in this regard his will is fulfilled indeed! All do more than fear him. They also hate him." Never throughout the two years did Paul's "Black Cabinet" and political police force cease from almost frenzied repression and espionage. Never, meanwhile, did he himself cease from wholesale allotment of exile, forfeiture, and disgrace. Everywhere he saw plots and sedition. His own son Alexander, he suspected to the point that once he actually requested Prince Eugene of Wurtemberg,

his consort's nephew, to come and take Alexander's place, and become imperial heir.

So at last a plot for Paul's removal did materialize. In it the chief movers were the Military Governor of St. Petersburg (a Courlander officer named Pahlen), two Zubov brothers, Nikita Panin (nephew to Catherine's Panin), Vice-Admiral Ribas, and Whitworth. But on Whitworth receiving his passport, and Panin a sentence of banishment, the plot languished awhile. Then Pahlen re-breathed into it the breath of life, and this time, as he did not care wholly to entrust its success to the energy of Russian colleagues, took for his principal assistant a Hanoverian general named Benningsen. Others then joined in the affair, and on 23 March, 1801, a midnight *rendezvous* was held in the Preobrazhenski officers' messroom, and then all started for the Mikhailovski Palace, where Paul was in residence at the time.

En route Pahlen divided his forces into two parties. He himself led the one, and Benningsen and the Zubovs the other. And the palace was to be entered simultaneously by different doors. That night, shortly before one o'clock, an alarm rang out, and the Guards at the palace rushed to the grand staircase. At the same moment Pahlen and Benningsen appeared at the top of the stairs, and shouted: "Halt, men! The emperor has expired of a seizure. Alexander is now your emperor."

But what really happened that night, between twelve and one o'clock, was this: The first to reach the palace was Benningsen's and the Zubovs' party. Entering by a side door, without waiting for their comrades, they reached the emperor's suite by a private staircase, and there encountered a couple of valets sleeping in the ante-room. At once they overcame these valets—wounding one of them as they did so—and then set to work to force the door of the bedchamber. The noise of this awakened the emperor, and he sought to conceal

himself, some have said behind a screen, and others up the huge chimney space, and succeeded in doing so at least to the extent that the conspirators failed to perceive him on first entering. Then he was betrayed by his protruding legs, and Benningsen and one of the Zubovs advanced upon him with drawn swords, and demanded that he should sign a Manifesto of Abdication which they had brought with them. This, however, he would not do: rather, he, despite his terror, argued, blustered, and at length shouted for help. Upon that, as his action threatened a risk of rescue, one of the conspirators (it is not known precisely who) caught up a snuffbox from a table, and brought it down upon the emperor's head. Paul, however, struggled and shouted as before: until at last another of the conspirators (again it is not known precisely who) divested himself of his military sash, twisted it round the emperor's neck, and pulled at it until life was extinct. Yet in justice to Benningsen and the Zubovs it should be said that the actual assassins at least were not they. Nor was it they who, when Paul was dead, wrought upon his body the outrages alleged by some.

Then Pahlen sought the rooms of the Grand Duke Alexander. On hearing that he had been deprived of a father "through an attack of apoplexy," Alexander wept so copiously (he could always do that with ease) that at last Pahlen exclaimed roughly: "Enough of that boyishness! Now, rule. First of all let the Guards see you. Remember that there may depend upon your present fortitude the welfare of millions," and pushed him towards the doorway. Then, when he caught sight of the soldiers ranged without, Alexander did contrive to check his emotion, and utter the famous words: "My father has just died of apoplexy. I desire that all things, during my reign, shall continue as under my beloved grandmother."

CHAPTER XIII

ALEXANDER I

THE news of Paul's brusque end was received with rejoicings everywhere. Yet let us remember that this has happened on almost every change of regime in Russia, and probably comes rather of the Russian's taste for novelty than of any serious process of thought. A Russian proverb has it that "even if the Shah himself spits into a pool the water ripples but for a moment."

As an adherent of La Harpe's type of incoherent liberalism, Alexander let this popular jubilation run free, and also essayed to please his immediate entourage by recalling Nikita Panin from exile. Yet he never really pardoned either Panin or his fellow-conspirators, but gradually got rid of them by sending Pahlen to his estate in Courland, and Platon Zubov to Europe, and Nicholas Zubov to Siberia, whilst at the same time he debarred Panin from office and deprived Benningsen of his property in Lithuania, and confined others to given localities, and transferred a number of Guards officers to line regiments in Siberia and the Caucasus.

Then, called upon to choose between a continuance of his grandmother's policy pure and simple and observance of La Harpe's principles pure and simple, he chose the middle course of Catherine's policy modified with individual accretions. For a beginning he constituted certain private intimates of his, Kotchubei, Novosiltzev, Adam Czartoryski, and Paul Stroganov, into a "Committee of Public Reconstruction," and gave it for task a complete recast of the social fabric. Also, though he had taken care, on accession, not to sign a

constitutional or a limitatory charter of any kind, he conceded the Senate a new right of advisal of the Crown before formulation of a new law, and also created a "Council of the Empire." But these and all his other so-called reforms were half-measures. For example, whilst he granted the serfs of the Baltic Provinces emancipation, he replied to the Russian serfs' petition for protection from their masters with military action. And though, later, he granted privately owned Russian serfs a right of emancipation with the master's consent, he still withheld from those serfs full emancipation. And though he abolished Peter the Great's colleges in favour of eight Ministries, he forbore to create either a council of ministers or a premiership. And though he reorganized the existing universities and founded two new ones, he refused administrative and scientific autonomy to both the one and the other.

Indeed it was in the higher education that his liberalism achieved the shortest life of all, and in 1818 some German student demonstrations led him to tighten up educational supervision by creating a Ministry of Instruction Committee charged "to devise measures for establishment of sound concord between faith, learning, and State authority," and to review all educational manuals then in use, more especially native-written manuals, and "thence to excise all that may be found to gainsay Christianity, and to be but vain conjecture as to the formation, and re-formations, of the earth," and to ensure that "in no book concerning medicine shall there be taught aught of what tends to debase the human soul, or to militate either against inward freedom or against Divine Providence." Inevitably there came of this that even before the end of his reign Russia's universities lost all their best professors, and became so discredited that in 1822 the number of students at the University of St. Petersburg was forty only, and the same with regard to the University of

Kazan, since the youth of the country as a whole was now gaining its higher education either at Dorpat, or at a foreign college, or in one of Russia's purely military schools, or under home *gouverneurs* who in many cases were little better than ignorant adventurers.

Alexander's inconsequence and instability went far beyond education, for they affected both his home policy and his foreign. Always he gave with the one hand and took away with the other. This was because he believed himself to be a liberal when in reality he was an absolutist. Prince Adam Czartoryski's memoirs tell us that "the emperor loved liberty only as concerned its forms, and them only as he loved stage spectacles: he would not have cared if all the world had been free so long as it did his bidding." An instance of this is that, though his ready susceptibility to influence led him in 1806 to let Speranski introduce new institutions modelled exactly upon those of the French Consulate, he in 1812 decided that Speranski was too progressive (Speranski, be it understood, loved actuality, whereas Alexander cared only for illusion), and at the instance of the now dominant and clamorous Nationalist Party sent him to reside on his country estate.

But in his dealings with the Powers of Europe it was that Alexander most displayed his invincible itch for posing as disinterested when really he was but ambitious. Thus first of all he withdrew Russia from the "league of armed neutrality" entered into by Paul. Then he made peace with England, concluded a *rapprochement* with Austria, and formed, at Memel, a Prussian alliance based less upon Russian interests than upon his individual desire to flourish "chivalrous gestures" before a monarch likely to appreciate them.¹ Then, on the recurrence of an interval of pan-European peace, he entered into relations with the First Consul as well. Then, as suddenly, he made Napoleon's execution of the Duc

¹ King Frederick William III of Prussia.

d'Enghien¹ a pretext for again breaking with Napoleon, and joining the current anti-French Coalition. Upon this interference of Alexander's in a quarrel which was not Russia's concern at all disappointment followed fast, for, beaten at Austerlitz, Russia was beaten again at Eylau and at Friedland. So yet again Alexander deserted his friends, Austria and Prussia, on the excuse that they and not himself had brought upon Russia these military disasters, and returned to Napoleon, and, falling upon his neck, concluded, at Tilsit, an arrangement for a joint partition of the world. Lastly, finding that the resultant blockade of Russia which the Powers instituted proved deleterious to Russian trade, and that Napoleon's creation of a Grand Duchy of Warsaw aroused unrest in Russian Poland, and enabled Napoleon to threaten to invade the latter, Alexander left the French Emperor once again, and broke off the current negotiations for a marriage between him and the Grand Duchess Anna.² The result was that in 1812 Russia had to face Napoleon on her own soil, but won the conflict by continually devastating the country to the enemy's front, drawing him ever farther and farther from his base, harrying him without cease, and letting hunger, fatigue, and cold accomplish the rest. That done, Alexander at length found himself able to assume his long-cherished rôle of Europe's arbiter, saviour, and guardian angel.

Earlier in 1812 his religious bent increased. Constantly he worried over his father's murder, and constantly he vacillated between Orthodoxy, a vague, mystical Christianity, and the freethought which in

¹ The only son of the Duc de Bourbon, and therefore a possible claimant to the French throne. Napoleon charged him with conspiring, in company with men named Cadoudal and Pichegru, against his life, and had him arrested at Baden in violation of Baden's neutrality, court-martialled, and shot.

² Anna Pavlovna, youngest sister of Alexander, and, later, Consort of William II of Holland.



ALEXANDER I

1807 had moved him to delete from a State Act the Divine Name, and take to frequenting Masonic gatherings. The original cause of this religious accentuation was a visit paid to the estate of one of the Saltykovs. On that occasion his host suggested resolution of the emperor's difficulties by opening a Bible at random, and taking for a guide the text upon which first his eye should fall. And the text in question was the passage: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord: He is my refuge, my fortress, and my God. In him I will trust."¹ And thenceforth the emperor began to devote more and more time to prayer, and in 1813 accorded a warm welcome to John Paterson, a British missionary, and on being shown a scheme for a union on the lines of the British and Foreign Bible Society,² bade some high Church dignitaries not only attend the new union's meetings, but also serve on its committee. Further: to demonstrate the more the essential unity of all Christian communities, he caused the Scriptures to be printed in all the dialects of the empire, and then distributed far and wide. But later this yearning for Christian brotherhood at large took on a political hue as well as a religious, and he advanced from the idea that God had chosen him to protect not only Russia, but Europe in general, to the idea that Europe's rulers ought to form themselves into a Christian-political fraternal bond. Probably the idea first took shape from the circumstance that at Heilbronn, in 1814, he, after visiting London and receiving there no great encouragement even from the Quakers, fell in with a Baroness Juliana de Krüdener,³ the

¹ Ps. xci, 1, 2.

² Founded ten years earlier.

³ *Née* Vietinghoff. The widow of a former Russian ambassador to Vienna, she wrote a remarkable autobiographical novel entitled *Valérie*.

mystical-sentimental type of whose views wrought upon him an immediate and a profound impression.

During the following two years the Great Powers recast the Continent—shared amongst themselves the territories of which they had stripped France, and re-ordered some of the secondary States' internal governance. Then they agreed to maintain this condition of things permanently, as a support to what they called "European equilibrium" and to legitimate monarchical rule, and to opposition to fresh regimes and wars of the French Revolutionary type. Then Alexander resolved to convert this political union into a union religious as well; and he submitted the project to the King of Prussia and the Austrian Emperor, and the one received it cordially, and the other one at least civilly, and on 26 September, 1815, an Orthodox autocrat, a Protestant king, and a Catholic emperor bound themselves together as "The Holy Alliance." In the treaty which embodied this unprecedented pact, and which opens with a mystical invocation of "The Most Holy and Indivisible Trinity," we see what, in sum, was an agreement to uphold Christian-fraternal unity against unity of the revolutionary-fraternal species, and, with that, an agreement concluded by three sovereigns in the name of their peoples, but altogether apart from those peoples' national Churches. However, the affair never amounted to much more than a solemn demonstration. For a while, certainly, it did influence to a certain extent the opponents of European restoration—particularly the French opponents concerned; but eventually it became confounded by public opinion with an anti-French *political* alliance, and the popular voice denounced Alexander's grandiose scheme as a despotic weapon against popular freedom.

Alexander, therefore, enjoyed only for a little while the rôle of leading his allies and the thought of Europe. All too soon his guiding motive was seen to be but

personal ambition, and his policy to be but futility. A particularly implacable foe of the alliance was the Austrian statesman Metternich: and when the battle of Waterloo had been won without Russia's help at all Alexander reached Paris only to find that his allies had forestalled him in the political sphere even as he had forestalled them in the religious, for already Wellington had brought back Louis XVIII, and re-established him upon the throne of France. Later Alexander's hopes of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle too were dashed, for whereas he looked to see the Congress register at least a few first-fruits of his cherished scheme, Metternich and Louis turned the tables to his complete discomfiture. In his disappointment he faced about to the Nearer East, where his notion was to liberate the Orthodox Christian populations from the Ottoman Empire, and form of them a group of petty States dependent upon Russia. But there too he failed, for straightway Metternich incited the Powers to shout: "Hands off the Balkan Peninsula!" and, driven back upon himself, he had, finally, to turn to the only thing left, namely, governance of his own empire.

In 1819 a draft charter of his proposed to add an elective chamber to the Senate. But as, during the following year, a military revolt recurred in Italy, and a revolution in Spain, and his German agent, Kotzebue,¹ was murdered by a German student, he, cumulatively disgusted with these events, renounced once and for all Europe's liberal ideas, and, resolving at all costs to keep them out of Russia, issued, on 1 August, an *ukaz* dissolving Masonic lodges and every species of secret society, strengthened the literary censorship, and whilst rejecting the Synod's suggestion for dissolution also of

¹ August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue, a German dramatist and historian who, born in 1761, was assassinated by a German student on 23 March, 1819, for having ridiculed the Burschenschaft (Students' Guild Movement).

the new Bible Society, forbade the New Testament to be further printed in Russian, or even read by students. The same craving to move right-ward led him likewise to listen to General Araktcheiev (who had been Paul's adviser as well) when that statesman mooted introduction of "military colonies" on the Swedish system. Under the system a given regiment was billeted upon a given village, and the villagers gradually incorporated into its ranks, and all the neighbourhood militarized, until peasants actually could be seen going about their civilian tasks in uniform, and had to shave clean their faces (which came particularly hard upon the Old Believing section, as that section's faith taught its adherents that only bearded must they, on the Judgment Day, present themselves before the Almighty), and were set to perform so much military drill as to leave them only two days a week for work on their own account, and to undergo kit inspection, and the rest, at frequent intervals. Besides, the system opened the door to extensive corruption of management, and, in sum, cost the State a huge amount, not only in cash and equipment, but also in expenses connected with repression.

Finally Alexander, now thoroughly disillusioned and as hesitant and diffident as ever, committed the internal governance of the State to Araktcheiev and the Committee of Ministers, and owing partly to grief at the death of a beloved natural daughter, and partly to a deterioration of his and his consort's health caused by the humidity of the capital, and aggravated by a Nevan flood of November 1824, decided to go, with his consort, for a long stay at Taganrog on the Azovian littoral. And two months later, whilst returning thither from a brief scientific expedition to the Crimea, he caught a chill which in ten days brought about his death. He died with no legitimate issue to survive him.

Inevitably a character so complex and so enigmatical could not disappear without evocation of legends on the

subject. The most persistent of those legends has been that Alexander did not die at Taganrog, but secretly migrated to Siberia, and there abode for a further forty years as "Father Fedor Kuzmitch." A Fedor Kuzmitch did, in his time, exist, and whoever he may have been in reality, there remains the fact that when he died in 1864 he was granted burial in the monastery of Saint Alexis—in, that is to say, consecrated ground—despite that on his deathbed he had, as usual, refused to receive the Sacrament, and thereby placed himself beyond the Church's pale. Even more curious is the fact that his headstone cross bore, until they were deleted by order of the Governor of Tomsk, the words: "Here lies the body of the great, the blessed Father Fedor Kuzmitch," and that *blagoslavenni*, the term used for "blessed," is a term coinciding precisely with a title conferred exclusively upon the Emperor Alexander by the Russian Church.

CHAPTER XIV

NICHOLAS I

As soon as the Grand Duke Nicholas heard of his brother's death he duly took the oath to Constantine as the brother whom right of seniority (for Paul had, as we know, debarred females) now made heir. But Constantine was Viceroy of Poland, and there had formed ties connected both with his official duties and with an *affaire du cœur* which rendered him extremely reluctant to leave that position. Hence, on learning of Alexander's demise, he wrote to Nicholas what he had before expressed with regard to the succession,¹ namely that he wished altogether to be passed over. The communication, however, did not constitute a formal abdication, and therefore Nicholas duly swore in the troops of the capital, and also the principal Government dignitaries. And even when this brought from Warsaw a second letter of renunciation, whilst in the meanwhile the late emperor's will was opened and found to nominate Nicholas in due form, the latter still held his hand pending a formal abdication on Constantine's part, nor published any Accessional Manifesto. Only when from Warsaw there came an absolutely definite declaration did the comedy close. During those two weeks, therefore, Russia stood ignorant as to who the next Tsar was to be, and shortly afterwards the affair known to history as the Dekabrist ² conspiracy took place.

¹ Immediately after the murder of his father. But though Constantine's wish had been acceded to even earlier, at a family conclave held during Alexander's lifetime, Alexander had never, for some unknown reason, made the granting of it public.

² From *Dekabr*, December.

Hitherto the more liberal—or, rather, subversive—ideas of Europe had not reached Russia direct for the reason that hitherto Russia had lacked direct contact with that quarter. Nevertheless the wars of Alexander's reign had swept so many Russian officers into the West—especially this had been the case as regards the allies' occupation of France during 1814–18—that there came to be prevalent in cultured Russia a wide knowledge of the West's life and modes of thought. Then later, when they had returned home, where there obtained harsh governance and universal espionage and repression, those officers had, naturally enough, found themselves drawing comparisons between foreign social orders and their own. And from that, owing to the impression made upon them by the cruelty of the serf system, and by the prevailing high-handedness and venality of Russia's officials, those officers, and more especially the officers drawn from aristocratic families, had gone on to form secret societies such as existed in western Europe. The first of the kind to appear in Russia was a society known sometimes as "The Union of Salvation," and sometimes as "The Union of True Sons of Russia." And by the year 1818 it had evolved for itself a regular charter, and changed its name to "The Union of Public Safety" (occasionally, also, "The Green Book"), and adopted a programme of abolition of serfage, equality of all before the law, publicity of State policy, annulment of the State liquor monopoly, amelioration of the clergy's lot, reduction of the peacetime military establishment, and curtailment of the existing twenty-five-years military service term. Then (in 1820) it again reorganized itself, and at the same time, for enlargement of its scope of action, divided itself into a Northern Section under Colonel Nikita Muraviev, with a programme of a constitutional monarchical character (advocating limitation of the supreme power much as obtains in the American United States),

and into a Southern Section under Colonel Pestel and Prince Sergius Muraviev-Apostol, with a programme of a semi-republican character, and an embodiment of that programme's articles in a new *Russkaia Pravda* ("Russian Right"). Finally the uncertainty occasioned by the interregnum, and by Constantine's thrice-repeated abdication, and by the confusion with regard to the oath, joined with Nicholas's long-established reputation for treating the army's officers and men with harshness in spurring the Union to a definite trial of strength, with, as the day fixed for the attempt, the eve of the day (27 December) appointed for the fresh oath-taking, the oath-taking to Nicholas. True, the authorities received word of the scheme in advance, but as they wished to avoid arrests at that juncture, they decided rather to try a disintegration of the movement by arranging for the oath to be administered at different hours and at different spots. However, the officers of one of the Guards battalions duly succeeded in inducing their men to rise and come out into the Place of the Senate, and form themselves into hollow square. And then there added their ranks to these some other details, until the whole had come to number several thousands. Shouting "Long live Constantine and Constitutsia!" (for they believed "Constitutsia" to be the name of Constantine's morganatic consort in Poland, instead of the word representing "Constitution"), the men remained doggedly where they were, and refused to disperse. At first the authorities sought to parley, and sent to the rebels, for the purpose, a General Milovodovitch who had much distinguished himself in the campaign of 1812; but almost at once one of the rebels' officers shot him in the back. The next item in the proceedings was an interlude—a typically Russian interlude—of absolute immobility on the part of the one side, and of hesitancy and vacillation on the part of the other. But at last the Government sent for

artillery. And when a slight oversight of not having also sent for ammunition had been rectified the order "Fire!" was given, and the affair ended sanguinarily in a salvo of grapeshot.

In the south the other branch of the Union also succeeded in bringing out three battalions. But when the battalions had shouted "Hurrah for a republic!" for a while they too, like their comrades in the north, were overcome and put under arrest.

Later that night Nicholas wrote to Constantine to say that everything had now quietened down. And at 4 a.m. he added to the letter a postscript that "the troops have duly sworn allegiance to me, and the conspirators, and, above all, their three chief leaders, been imprisoned, and many valuable documents seized." The three chief leaders referred to were Prince Obolenski, the poet Ryleiev, and Prince Trubetskoi. Subsequently there was added to them Bestuzhev, the Grand Duke Michael's¹ aide-de-camp.

The affair made such an impression upon Nicholas that he conducted a personal interrogation of the accused. In all they numbered one hundred and twenty-one, but only five of these—amongst them Ryleiev and Pestel—were sentenced to be hanged. The execution of the two named created a sensation throughout the whole of Europe, for just as they were being dragged aloft the ropes which were supporting them gave way, and they fell headlong and had their limbs badly injured. Nevertheless fresh ropes were procured, and the execution was completed.

The reign, therefore, began in an atmosphere of doubt and distrust. One result was such a lodging of *donos*, of information against persons, that, though the emperor had all the seized documents whence to gather an idea of the abuses which had given rise to the affair, he set aside those abuses' consideration until he had augmented

¹ Constantine's and Nicholas's younger brother.

the political police force, added four new bureaux (for dealing with, respectively, foreigners, sectarians, "high police matters," and "correspondence") to the Ministry of the Interior, and put them under a general Chief of Gendarmery. Only then did he—whilst still the Government seemed to look upon prevention of emigration of population and prevention of immigration of "European savour" as its two principal duties—carry out an amelioration, in part at all events, of the lot of the serfs, reorganize on militaristic lines the empire's colleges and universities, extend some assistance to commerce and agriculture, add to the roads, and build railways running from St. Petersburg to Tsarskoe Selo and Moscow.

Always Nicholas was an implacable champion of absolutism, and therefore he meted out punishment of the severest possible kind to any movement tending, as he thought, to diminish his authority. For example, when the Poles rose in 1831 the rising was drowned in blood. Then Polish families were sent to hard labour in Siberia and the Caucasus by the thousand. And then he, "the Head of the Church," and, therefore, the bounden opponent of Poland's and Lithuania's religious beliefs, had Polish and Lithuanian Catholics and Uniates subjected to a wholesale "conversion" to Orthodoxy. A report which he caused to be framed for him in 1833 declares:

Inasmuch as We now find Ourselves to be standing in the presence of a civil and religious deterioration of all Europe, We do intend to check with all speed the propagation of subversive ideas within Our dominions. For those dominions We are minded to establish upon sure foundations only, and to discover principles meet unto that end.

Those "principles," the report adds, were to be:

- (1) Russian Orthodoxy—the Church of our fathers,
- (2) the Russian Autocracy, as the primordial condition of

all Russian political life, and (3) Russian nationality—a more complex principle than the other two.

Of course, to ancient Muscovy the term “nationality” had been unknown. And now it was borrowed from western Europe to connote the idea of ultimately establishing a *velikoderzhanie*, or hegemony, of the Great Russian branch of the Slavonic stock over the whole of the Russian Empire in the first instance, and the whole of the Slavonic-speaking peoples in the second. It formed, in fact, at a slightly later date, the main tenet of the Slavophil Party. But Nicholas most clearly of all displayed his absolutism when, on Hungary rising against Austria in 1848, he had read in every church throughout the Russian Empire a manifesto that, “no matter with what frenzy the present subversive tendency may beat against Russia’s frontiers, never can it harm Us, for God is on Our side.” Again, when at about the same period the metropolitan police discovered young officers, professors, artisans, and others to be holding nightly reunions in order to read and to discuss works by Fourier, Proudhon, Louis Blanc, and their like, Nicholas had thirty-three of the principal suspects arrested. Twenty-one were condemned to death, and then reprieved at the last moment, and sent into exile instead, with, amongst their number, the great writer Dostoevski, who in his *House of the Dead* has related his Siberian experiences. A like motive once caused Nicholas to have all reading-rooms and libraries closed in the Baltic Provinces, and all foreign books stopped at the frontier, and a secret super-censorship instituted, and the Ministry of Public Instruction placed under military direction, and the teaching of philosophy confined exclusively to the ecclesiastical academies, and programmes of those academies, even so, to undergo previous scrutiny. Hence by the year 1853 there were in an empire of seventy million inhabitants only two thousand nine hundred university students, and an

official press-reading public only of twelve thousand. However, as freedom of the intellect seldom or never is governed by existent measure of political freedom, it was precisely under Nicholas's regime of repression that Russia developed a national literature and a school of outspoken criticism, and that Gogol wrote, and that Pushkin sang, and that Bielinski reviewed, and that Lermontov flourished, and that Turgenev and Tolstoi first appeared, and that Glinka showed his musical abilities.

First and foremost was Nicholas a military sovereign. Handsome of feature, steely of eye, he never was seen out of uniform, and delighted beyond all things in reviews of troops, and believed his army to have no rival. Accordingly he found it hard ever to relegate his seven hundred thousand men to tedious garrison life. As his first military conception after his accession, he took in hand consideration of a tackling of Turkey, and a year later did contrive to make Turkey settle up some differences arising out of the Treaty of Bucharest,¹ and to sign a Russo-Turkish agreement to that effect at Akkerman. Next came two campaigns with Persia. And when Nicholas had wrested from Persia the provinces of Erivan and Nakhichevan he, in 1827, tackled Turkey again. This time he took the position of Greece for his pretext, and having successfully goaded Sultan Mahmud into threatening reprisals for Nicholas's rôle at London,² and for an Allied defeat of Turkey's fleet at Navarino, sent Diebitch to occupy Moldavia and Wallachia, and then to cross the Danube and attack Silistria and Varna on the one side, and Turkish Armenia on the other, and, lastly, to attain Adrianople, where 8 September of the year 1827 witnessed the signature of a treaty freeing Greece from Turkey, and

¹ This treaty, concluded in 1812, had stripped Turkey of Bessarabia.

² The Convention of London of 1827 bound Russia, England, and France to help Greece against Turkey.

ceding the port of Anapa (on the Black Sea) to Russia,¹ and giving Russia, in addition, protectorate rights over Moldavia, Wallachia, and Servia. Then, to add to the advantage thus gained in the direction of the Caucasus, Nicholas initiated a fresh attempt to get the better of gallant Khan Shamil of Circassia. And in that task Russian soldiers spent the next quarter of a century.²

One result of France's revolution of July 1830 was formation of a Russo-French *entente*. But at first Nicholas, whose comprehension of the principles of the Holy Alliance stood in inverse ratio to his admiration of them, hesitated a little to recognize "the King of the Barricades,"³ and refused to call him "Brother." Indeed, only the fact that at that time Russian troops had suddenly to be concentrated in Poland for the repression of the rising of that year prevented Nicholas, we may conceive, from launching a counter-revolutionary crusade outright. That desperate bid of Poland's for freedom cost her her last-remaining liberties. Not for nothing, subsequently, did Nicholas and the sovereigns of Prussia and Austria assemble in Münchengrätz, Teplitz, and Kalisch. Europe was meant to perceive that only absolutist rulers, and, preferably, rulers of the Russian absolutist type, could safely have common cause made with them.

Nicholas never ceased to keep before his eyes a vision of laying the Ottoman Empire in the dust, or at least of rendering that empire his vassal. His motive in this may largely have been a floating vision also of Byzantium as the mystical cradle of Russia's faith. And in this respect Sultan Mahmud at last played into his hands

¹ It also gave Russia the port of Poti.

² Shamil's final subjugation was effected by Prince Bariatinski only in 1859, after a struggle begun by General Yermolov in 1816.

³ Louis Philippe—"Philippe Égalité," eldest son of the Duke of Orleans. Elected to the French throne after the July Revolution.

by falling a prey to dread of Mehemet-Ali, the Egyptian khedive, who suddenly rebelled against his suzerain. The circumstance gave Nicholas the chance of forcing the Sultan to accept his help and protection, and to sign a treaty to that effect at Unkiar Skelessi¹ on 8 May, 1833. But unfortunately England, France, and Austria took another view altogether, and the first-named country's Government lent Shamil support, and then hindered Russia's ally, the Shah, when he was attacking Herat in 1837-8, and then hindered Nicholas himself when he was advancing upon Khiva in 1839-41. On the other hand, on the Egyptians beating the Sultan's forces at Nezil, and France being seen to be standing behind Mehemet-Ali, St. Petersburg suddenly became more friendly with London, and formed an Anglo-Russian *rapprochement*, and, finally, on 15 July, 1840, signed an Anglo-Russian treaty. This so thoroughly made Louis Philippe believe that he was about to find himself confronted with a revival of the Coalition of 1813 that, rather than again see all Europe take fire, he yielded to the signatories, and forced Mehemet-Ali to leave Syria for his own country. Next, Russia's own turn was to come. Ever since signature of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi Europe had chafed under its clause relating to the Bosphorus, and now, by a Convention of 13 July, 1841, the powers undertook guaranty of the Ottoman Empire in common, and so regained free access of their fleets to the Euxine. Soon afterwards Nicholas visited England; and more than once during that visit he told Queen Victoria that, as the Ottoman Empire was become "a sick man," he and she had better set to and decide what ultimately was to replace that empire. Later he said the same thing to the English ambassador in St. Petersburg, but the suggestion

¹ A small town on the Bosphorus. An article of the treaty obliged Turkey, in case of an attack by the Powers, to close the Bosphorus to all war vessels save Russia's.

alarmed the British Government instead of attracting it, for it wished "the sick man's" life to be preserved, not ended, and it was backed up in this by Napoleon III, who at once had a grudge against Nicholas for having slighted him and, as a neophyte to sovereignty, was burning to acquire "glory." Next, old-standing trouble in connection with the Holy Places of Jerusalem once more cropped up, and was aggravated this time by Nicholas putting in a claim to act as protector of all the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and in March 1853 Menshikov delivered an ultimatum to the Sultan, and in July a rupture occurred, Russian troops crossed the Danube, and the precedent of 1828 was followed—that is to say, siege was laid to Silistria. Nevertheless Russia gained no successes in the campaign beyond defeating the Turkish fleet off Sinope on 30 November. This was because, although Nicholas had, reasonably enough, counted upon the help, or at least upon the neutrality, of Austria (for had not, in 1848, Paskevitch's army saved Austria from revolution?), Austria ungratefully utilized the Conference of Vienna merely to brake Russia's wheel: after which she sent warships to join those of France in the Black Sea, and, on 10 April, 1854, formally joined a Franco-British alliance against Turkey, and on France and England dispatching troops eastward, and causing a withdrawal of the Russian forces from before Silistria to become advisable, saw to it that the Russians should not return thither by occupying the Balkan Provinces herself. Then the French and the English disembarked in the Crimea, won a battle on the Alma, and invested Sevastopol. At once Nicholas's "bluff" became exposed. At once, for all his soldiers' bravery, it was seen that they lacked plans, *matériel*, proper leadership, and every other requisite for good management and success. Valour was not enough by itself, and, in spite of strenuous efforts to relieve Sevastopol, Balaclava took



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place on 25 October, and Inkerman on 5 November, and the war moved forward steadily to a Russian collapse.

Before this point was reached Nicholas, grieved and humiliated, fell ill. For some weeks he lingered, with his last shred of interest in life completely gone. He died on 2 March, 1855, bequeathing to Alexander, his eldest son, the task of at once liquidating the disastrous Crimean campaign and attempting continuance of rule as a divinely anointed autocrat.¹

¹ The author adds a story that, at the last, Nicholas caused his English physician, Sir James Wylie, to administer to him a dose of narcotic poison.

CHAPTER XV

ALEXANDER II, THE TSAR LIBERATOR

LIKE his father and grandfather, Alexander II was born of a German princess. Yet, unlike his father and grandfather, he was not military, despite a semi-military education. When he ascended the throne the war in the Crimea was not yet over, and therefore his coronation at Moscow took place only on 7 September of the following year. During the previous February a congress sitting at Paris compelled Russia to let the Black Sea be neutralized again, and once more to cede Bessarabia to Turkey.

Alexander had already, when still grand duke, acquired some knowledge of things in the empire, for he had made an extensive tour of the north and Siberia, and procured there a certain betterment of the exiles' and convicts' conditions, as well as had more than once acted as regent in his father's absence. He was absolutely what one would call a gentleman, and, at that, one possessed of a pleasing presence and a charming manner. Also, as he had no fanatical views on either Orthodoxy or Autocracy, he had never much cared for his father's policy, and now, after liquidating the results of the war, set about overhauling the empire from top to bottom. First he proclaimed abolition of the repressive regime, relaxation of the censorship, facilitation of access to university study, and more freedom to travel or reside abroad. Next, in the March of 1856, he convened an assembly of the Muscovite nobility, and told them roundly that serfdom must go. "Better," he said, "that we abolish possession of souls from above

than, later, have it abolished without us from below." Incidentally, some assert that what definitely moved him to this decision was perusal of Ivan Turgenev's *Sketches of a Sportsman*. Another thing which he felt strongly was that it was himself and Russia's other large landowners who should take the initiative in it all. First he charged a "Committee of Administration of Peasant Affairs" to work out a suitable scheme; but the committee, wishing to gain time, delegated the task for a while to a sub-committee, and it was only in 1858 that an Imperial Rescript could definitely proclaim the terms proposed. At once the powerful Slavophil group which had become established in Moscow during the repressive regime cried out that no such important project could be carried through save it were modelled upon those two ancient Russian institutions the *mir* and the *artel*.¹ Least of all, the Slavophiles averred, could it be carried through on the lines of any socio-administrative system of the West. The prime necessity of all, according to them, was to bind the peasant to the land. Otherwise there would spring from the reform the result that the agricultural proletariat would breed a proletariat *tout court*. Hence, having considered these communications and representations, Miliutin, the President of the Committee, took for the guiding principle of the process land-assignment, not to the peasant individually, but to his *mir* collectively, so that the *mir* could, by two-thirds majorities, reapportion the land for its members' usufruct. The peasant individually was to redeem of his master his dwelling, his garden, and as much plot as would earn his family and himself a livelihood, with the Government affording him liberal assistance towards acquiring immovable property beside. The proposal for this system of dividing the land amongst the freed serfs came originally from the Grand Duchess Helena Pavlovna, a lady progressive of outlook, and

¹ Rural commune, and urban co-operative guild.

noted for her brilliant *salon*. And in accordance with her advice it was, and with the advice of his close friend General Rostovtsev, that the Tsar, to set an example, let the serfs of the *udieli* (imperial appanages, Crown estates) have the land on a forty-nine-year redemptory payment. Thereby these serfs, who for long past had, for that matter, been not so much serfs as land-attached tenant farmers, became farmers holding lands on long, ultimately redeemable leases.

Nevertheless emancipation of the country's privately owned serfs was greatly retarded by the passive resistance to it shown by the owners. True, the latter contrived to resign themselves to emancipation *per se*; but what they did not want to do was to give up to their peasantry the necessary land. At a meeting of committees of nobility in St. Petersburg this was voiced unanimously by twenty-one of those committees. But after that a second such meeting had debated the matter to as little purpose as the first, Alexander cut the Gordian knot by then and there publishing the *Ukaz* of Abolition as effective. By the act he came for ever to be known to the Russian people as "the Tsar Liberator."

Then, aided by Golovkin, Valuev, and Reutern, all of them statesmen of liberal views, he set to work to reform the State's legal machinery, and to modernize its administrative system. In this connection he created elective *zemstvos*,¹ further endowed public instruction, added to the number of secondary educational establishments, made military service a (theoretically at all events) compulsory obligation, and commissioned General Dimitri Miliutin to carry through a complete overhauling of the army.

These reforms, of course, pleased the progressives, as also did institution of a Committee of Ministers, creation of a corporation of advocates, introduction of the jury

¹ Local government bodies.

system, and publication of State budgets; but excess of impatience to see Russia a European entity also led the progressive-intellectual element, an element as ignorant of political realities then as it is now, to demand, in addition, a constitution in full, and to choose the worst possible moment for doing so, a moment when, conciliatory measures in Poland having proved abortive, Poland was once more rising. The result was a liberal catastrophe, for it enabled the Nationalists in Russia to make the Tsar believe that thenceforth, if the unity of the empire was to be preserved, radical opinions must be fought tooth and nail. And as Alexander himself had never been in favour of a wholly independent Poland—he had told a deputation of the Polish nobility as much some seven years earlier—this, joined with the reflection that he had to no purpose appointed the liberal statesman Gorchakov to be Polish viceroy specially in order that that representative might mitigate coercion in Poland, proclaim an amnesty, restore confiscated estates, and allow Poles to emigrate, drove him, Alexander, to the last pitch of exasperation, and led him to make such a complete surrender to the Russian Nationalists as ended in Poland undergoing a final Russification process, and Russia herself having her process of administrative reorganization checked. After which—and the more so, perhaps, because on 16 April, 1866, his life was attempted by a man named Karakosov—he announced that thenceforth he should consider his sovereign power to be at once absolute and irresponsible, and relapsed wholly into reaction, nor sought in any way to refute the Slavophiles and the *Gazette of Moscow* when they reiterated their assertion that the cause of the growth of anarchistic and revolutionary ideas had been his reforms. For that matter, the origin of Karakosov's deed *had* been, almost undoubtedly, Nihilism. Nihilism was a theory leading its adherents, mostly young people, fanatically to cultivate the natural sciences, a

philosophy of a positivist-materialist species, and the tenets, firstly, that religion, the institution of the family, and the notion of constitutional government were things of abomination, and, secondly, that trust could be placed in Buckle, Darwin, and Büchner alone. Pursuing this nihilistic creed, young cynics used to form themselves into secret societies, and ceaselessly work against the existing social order with propaganda of violence, exploitation of the popular land hunger, and exacerbation of the peasant unrest because of, firstly, land arbitrators' low estimate of the plottage necessary for a peasant family's support, and, secondly, the Government's niggardliness of assistance towards acquisition of required implements and stock. Yet, for all that the nihilists extended their activities to every rural district in the country, they met with little success anywhere, since universally the peasants distrusted them, and called them "fine folk from the towns." Ultimately the youthful propagandists had to return to their homes in St. Petersburg or Moscow, and there to content themselves with making bombs for projection at imperial and ministerial legs.¹

Foreign policy Alexander left to Prince Gorchakov entirely. And after the Polish rising of 1863 that policy veered markedly towards Germany, for the reason that Germany's recent help in Poland had been of far more practical use to Russia than had the well-meant representations of England, France, and Austria. And the Russo-German intimacy which began then proved of considerable duration, for it had for one of its bases Alexander's profound admiration for his uncle, William I.² Such was this admiration as to lead Alexander in no way to object, or to require a *quid pro quo*, even when,

¹ The movement, known at first as the *B' Narod*, or "To the People," movement, became, later, the movement of *Narodnaia Volia*, or "Will of the People."

² William I, German Emperor. Previously to 1871, William VII, King of Prussia.

in 1864, he was asked to let the Danish duchies pass to the Duke of Oldenburg, and in 1867 quite to glory in being seen about Paris with the victor of Sadowa,¹ and three years later, when the Franco-Prussian War was in progress, to fail occasionally in the impeccability of his neutrality. Prussia's success in this war enabled Russia to tear up, at the Conference of London, the clause in the Treaty of Paris of 1856 which had neutralized the Black Sea. And in 1875 Alexander made amends to France by at least helping her out of what might have redeveloped into tension between France and Germany.

In 1872 Bismarck arranged a Berlin meeting of the sovereigns of Russia, Germany, and Austria, and brought about at that meeting the *entente* which became known as the *Dreikaiserbund*, or League of the Three Emperors. That arrangement bound the emperors to maintain the territorial results of 1866 and 1870, to support one another if fresh difficulties should arise in Eastern Europe, and everywhere to combat revolution. But though, owing to Francis Joseph's resigned acceptance of the outcome of Sadowa, the East might specially have been thought to threaten no difficulties of the kind, it was thence precisely that difficulties eventually came. This was because, firstly, Alexander determined to regain Bessarabia from Turkey, and, secondly, the Slavophil Party never ceased to inflame the Russian people to sympathy with the Slavonic States in the Balkans. The end was that on 24 April, 1877, Alexander followed up sundry threats to Turkey with publication, at Kishinev, of a declaration of hostilities outright. Then he proceeded in person to the seat of war, and

¹ The principal battle of the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. This war, waged over the question of who should possess the spoils—namely, Schleswig and Holstein—of the Austro-Prusso-Danish war of two years earlier, ended in the complete discomfiture of the Austrians. During the above-mentioned visit to Napoleon III in Paris Alexander's life was attempted by a man named Berezovski.

remained there until Plevna's fall had assured Russia success.

Russia's attack upon Turkey was delivered simultaneously in Europe and in Asia. In the latter, where she had sixty thousand men under Loris Melikov available, her advance was speedy, and Loris soon had captured Ardahan, invested Kars, and begun to threaten Erzeroum: but in Europe, where the Grand Duke Nicholas commanded an army of two hundred and fifty thousand, her advance was slower, since for long it was held up at Plevna by the gallant Osman Pasha. Not until Russia had mobilized four army corps in addition to the existing force, and also accepted the services of sixty thousand Roumanians, did Osman's defence become able to be dealt with. All through the September of 1877 did Russia's attacks upon Plevna prove fruitless. Only by replacing the grand duke with Todleben (the hero of Sevastopol) in the chief command, and by cutting all the communications of the town until at last the starving garrison had to make a desperate sortie, was the town occupied in the enemy's rear, and the enemy himself forced to surrender on the River Vid.¹ Then Gourko crossed the Balkans amid a temperature of twenty-five degrees, stormed the Shipka Pass (held by the Turks since the previous August), reached Adrianople on 20 January, and, three days later, was beside the Sea of Marmora, and approaching Constantinople herself. Finally there was signed at Stefano, near Constantinople, on 3 March, a treaty whereby Montenegro, Servia, and Roumania were declared independent States, a new State of Bulgaria was created, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were given autonomy. Ten days subsequently an English squadron cast anchor in the Golden Horn, off Princes' Islands, but Alexander at once had Constantinople occupied, and the

¹ One who played a very notable part in these operations was General Skobelov.

English withdrew. Nevertheless the subsequent Congress of Berlin spelt but failure and disappointment for Russia. Indeed, Govchakov afterwards said that the Congress had constituted "the very darkest page in all Russia's career." The reason was that, whereas Alexander might justifiably have expected to be supported at the Congress by Germany, Bismarck, "forgetful of his every undertaking of 1870," showed only a desire for impartiality all round, and left to become primarily responsible for the Congress's decisions the two English plenipotentiaries—namely Disraeli and Salisbury, neither of whom loved Russia. The outcome was that Austria was given authority to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, and England authority to annex Cyprus, and Russia only authority to retain, of her Asiatic gains, Kars, Ardahan, and Batum—with, even at that, Batum registered as a free, and an exclusively commercial, port.

Naturally enough these results aroused intense popular discontent in Russia. Vehemently did the people accuse the Tsar of having failed to rise to the occasion—of having weakly yielded to Europe's politicians—of having let Germany play her real game of bringing about an Austro-German *entente*. And these imputations so hurt the Tsar that for a while he even withdrew from the *Dreikaiserbund*. Then once again, in 1879, affairs at home claimed his attention, for the terrorists already had seized upon the popular dissatisfaction to redouble an agitation in which they were not a little helped by the crying lethargy and stupidity of the country's police forces. On 14 August a man named Soloviev fired unsuccessfully at the emperor. Next a man named Hartmann tried to wreck the imperial train as it was travelling between Livadia and Moscow. Next, just after that General Gourko had been authorized to declare a general state of siege, half St. Petersburg was set rocking with a terrible explosion

in the Winter Palace. The actual scene was the state dining-room, where at half-past six o'clock on 17 February the Tsar was due to entertain Prince Alexander of Battenberg, the newly elected head of the newly created State of Bulgaria, at dinner. Only the fact that the Tsar happened to be detained in his study for a few moments saved, in all probability, both his life and the life of his guest. As it was only a few inoffensive Guardsmen and attendants were killed. So heinous was the crime as to create absolute stupefaction. Then Alexander invested Loris Melikov with powers completely dictatorial of character, and by *ukaz* of 27 February placed under him a "Supreme Commission of Defence of the Social Order." The next thing was that as Melikov was entering his hotel one afternoon a man named Molodetski fired three shots which proved harmless only because the bullets glanced off the heavy fur coat which Melikov happened to be wearing. At once the intended victim knocked the would-be assassin down, and held him until police reached the spot. When, two days later, Molodetski was hanged in the the Semenovski Square the crowd—this being the first occasion of such a spectacle for over half a century—reached almost unprecedented dimensions.

Alexander's consort, Maria Alexandrovna,¹ died on 3 June, 1880, but for long before that time he had maintained relations with the beautiful Princess Catherine Dolgoruki, and even given her, and his children by her, quarters under his roof. Now, the empress being dead, he regularized the connection with the princess by marrying her at Tsarkoe Selo in the presence of Count Adlerberg, General Baranov, General Ryleiev, and a girl friend of the princess's. After which he gave the Senate orders to decree as his second consort's style, "Her Serene Highness the Princess Yurievski." This name, Yurievski, he chose because he intended that

¹ Princess Marie of Hesse by birth.

later she should be given rank as empress as well as the position of consort, and meanwhile a patronymic so essentially Russian and "Rurikevitch" might win the popular favour more surely than a German name could be calculated to do.

In 1881, owing to the pitch reached by the terrorist agitation, Loris Melikov had to advise the Tsar to exercise exceptional care as regards his movements, and above all not to attend a Guards review fixed for 13 March. But Alexander would not listen. Even as Loris Melikov stood talking to him on the morning of the fatal day he, lending an ear mechanically only, signed a manifesto which on the morrow was to inform his people that he had decided to add to the Council of the Empire a popular-representative element.

The review over, the emperor bade his coachman drive home by the shortest route. The escort that day consisted of six mounted Cossacks, a Cossack seated beside the coachman, and three sleighfuls of police. Just as the *cortège* was half-way across the Catherine Quay a young man with long hair threw something wrapped in newspaper under the horses' feet, and there followed a tremendous explosion. On the smoke and cloud of snow clearing away, two Cossacks were seen to have fallen, and beside them there was stretched a street *gamin* who apparently had been waiting, out of curiosity, to see the *cortège* go past, whilst both of the carriage horses had been killed, and the carriage windows smashed, and the rumble wrenched off. Nevertheless the emperor was unscathed, and leaping out, he was making for the fallen men when the chief of the police escort stopped him, and begged that at once he would enter one of the police sleighs, and complete the journey home. Once again, however, the emperor would not listen. Turning next towards the terrorist who had thrown the bomb, and was now in a police official's grasp, he declared that first he must speak to the miscreant.

Then someone near him inquired anxiously: "Then is not your Majesty hurt at all?" and he replied: "No, not in the least, thank God!" The instant that the captured terrorist heard the words he raised his head with a sneer, and remarked: "Take care that you do not thank God too soon!" whilst almost simultaneously a second bomb was thrown by a second conspirator from the top of the parapet beside the canal, and a second frightful explosion ensued. When, this time, the smoke and flying snow cleared away, the emperor was seen trying to raise himself on hands and knees. His face was deadly pale, and his cloak wrenched from his shoulders, whilst from his legs, bare and mangled, blood was dripping, and fragments of flesh had been torn.

After constant and intense agony he died the same night.¹

¹ Later, five conspirators were hanged. Amongst them there was the daughter of an ex-Governor of St. Petersburg, Sophia Perovski by name.

CHAPTER XVI

ALEXANDER III

By his first consort, the Empress Maria Alexandrovna, Alexander II had six sons — Nicholas, Alexander, Vladimir, Alexis, Sergius, and Paul. But as the eldest of these, always a sickly youth, had died at Nice in 1865, it was Alexander, the next eldest, who now succeeded. Earlier an ardent passion for Princess Mestcherski had led him to beg leave of his father to withdraw, but his father had declined to allow that course, and married him off to the Princess Dagmar of Denmark,¹ fiancée of the late Nicholas, and disposed of Princess Mestcherski to a wealthy grandee named Demidov San Donato.

The new emperor was fair, fat, and slightly under forty, with expressionless features, and a physique enabling him easily to lift his wife and his eldest son with one arm, and to crumple a coin double with his fingers, and to fell a tree unaided. With that, too, he was a man absolutely moral and honourable, and given only to simple, stay-at-home pursuits. True, he was not clever, but he had been polished by Constantine Pobiedonostsev and other good tutors, and made to issue as invincibly Orthodox and invincibly Nationalist. Also, he resembled the ancient Muscovite Tsars in that he looked upon himself less as the sovereign of a nation than as the owner of a large and populous appanage, the inhabitants of which stood bound to develop that appanage under his supervision as his personal, hereditary property. He extended this nationalism even to

¹ Sister of the late Queen Alexandra of England.

the point of allowing no one to help in tending the State who could not read, write, and speak the Russian language.

On the eve of his assassination Alexander II had completed, in draft, a charter for a constitution, and, with it, a manifesto to inform his people that they were about to receive further political concessions. But though Loris Melikov asked the new emperor, a few hours after the tragedy, whether he, Melikov, was to have the manifesto sent for publication in the *State Gazette* of the following day (as would have been the usual course), and the emperor replied in what seems to have become by then the stereotyped formula: "Yes. In all things I desire my father's policy to be continued unbroken," he was so taken to task about it the same evening by Pobiedonostsev and others that the manifesto first was laid aside for the moment, and then shelved altogether. Then Alexander's nerves gave way. Yes, the thought of the outrage just committed upon his father so wrought upon the man capable of felling an ox with his fist that, retiring incontinently to Gatchina, he abandoned the care of the State—for the time being at all events—to Pobiedonostsev. Pobiedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod, and ex-Professor of Law in the University of Moscow, made his first task composition and publication of an Accessional Manifesto on Alexander's behalf. And this manifesto dissipated at a stroke the illusions of those who had been hoping to have flung to them a liberal bone. For the manifesto said that, "obedient to the Voice of God, and believing the Supreme Power of Our State to be solely authoritative and veritable, We, as that State's Autocrat Sovereign, are, for Our people's welfare, determined further to strengthen the Supreme Power, and to maintain it against all attacks." Be it added, however, that from that same hour nihilism did enter upon a steady decline.

From the first the Empress Maria Fedorovna

exercised a considerable influence over her mastodon of a husband. Pobiedonostsev saw to his domestic policy, but she it was, mostly, who guided him with regard to his foreign. For the rest, emperor and empress lived just the plain and unostentatious life of a *bourgeois* couple. Altogether was the tradition of luxury distinguishing the last few reigns done away with.

When Alexander became ruler the Russo-German *entente* was, though old-established, languishing. It needed use and exercise. The result was that M. de Giers, Gorchakov's successor in the chancellorship, had again and again to work to avert German misunderstandings, and to restore harmony between the two nations. But in 1884 Bismarck decided to breathe fresh life into the *Dreikaiserbund*, and, by arranging a meeting of the three sovereigns at Skierniewicz in Russian Poland, did Russia the good turn that she could feel the West secure behind her again, and once more take up the task of acquiring territory in Asia, and continue her advance in the direction of Afghanistan. Her first capture was Merv, and her second the Oasis of Akhad, and her third Sarakh. And a fourth tussle with the Afghans even when, pending final settlement of a Russo-Afghan frontier, an Anglo-Russian boundary commission already had fixed a provisional line gave Russia Penjdeh—it did so right under the very noses of England's commissioners. And though this caused a Russo-English rupture temporarily to threaten, a Convention established the frontier once and for all on 10 September, and the risk of an outbreak of trouble disappeared.

In the Bulgaro-Servian war of 1885 ¹ Russia supported Bulgaria, and Austria Serbia. Inevitably this bred a

¹ This war was fought because, without previously consulting Russia, Prince Alexander of Bulgaria suddenly annexed Eastern Roumelia. The act rendered Serbia uneasy, and she declared war, and was beaten after a fortnight's hostilities. Next year Russia compelled Prince Alexander's abdication.

coolness between Vienna and St. Petersburg, and another *rapprochement* between Vienna and Berlin, and enabled Signor Crispi of Italy to benefit by both. Then William I of Germany died (March 1888), and the last remnants of the policies alike of the Holy Alliance of 1815 and of the *Dreikaiserbund* of 1872 disappeared, since those two unions' conditions, sovereigns, and statesmen now were gone, and the Teutonic element in the Russian Imperial Family's blood had become mingled with elements of less pro-German tendency, and Frederick III of Germany's marriage with an English princess¹ had linked the German Imperial Family in ties of kinship with the English Court. Nevertheless Bismarck still so far defied public opinion both in his own country and in England as to continue, and even to emphasize further, his attentions to Russia. To the same end, and that any attempted exercise of English influence upon his master's foreign policy might be foiled, he in 1888, after the Emperor Frederick's death, advised William II to visit the Russian Court. And the same in 1890. Whilst in 1889 the Tsar paid a return visit to Berlin, and in 1891 the two sovereigns met at Kiel. But though Russia's Court and Society welcomed William cordially enough when he visited St. Petersburg, neither of William's visits effected much as regards working an essential change in Russia's foreign policy. Moreover, the entertainment then offered William in the Winter Palace had in it none of the old "family," familiar savour noticeable when sovereigns of Germany had been received in the Russian capital by Alexander's three predecessors. The reason why Alexander never could quite unbend to William is that Alexander always had floating before him a fear of hurting France's susceptibilities. Well, the loans

¹ Victoria, Princess Royal, oldest daughter of Queen Victoria. Her husband, Frederick III of Germany, reigned for three months only before expiring of an affection of the throat.

made to Russia by France in 1889 and 1891 were very large ones. However, Bismarck continued to strive his utmost—he did so more than ever after realizing what conceivably might come of a Franco-Russian alliance outright—to meet any view of Russia's which did not wholly clash with Germany's interests. From those endeavours he desisted only when a French squadron visited Kronstadt, and some Russian marines returned the compliment at Toulon and Paris. Finally, in 1893 it became known that a Franco-Russian alliance had come formally into being.

Alexander III died on 1 November, 1894. His death at least was a natural one, even if premature. And then the direction of Russia's fortunes passed to the Tsar's eldest son, Nicholas Alexandrovitch, with the pious hope that in his care the Russian conscience would continue to chase far from her the harmful doctrinaires imported from without.

CHAPTER XVII

NICHOLAS II

NICHOLAS was but twenty-six when unkind Fate set him to rule a vast and ever-restless empire. Neither worse fitted for the task was he nor better than his predecessors had been, for he had received a military education from General Danilovitch and a civilian education from competent tutors like Pobiedonostsev. Indeed, the latter's political influence showed itself in Nicholas to the end of his life. Still more was Nicholas's character moulded by the rough, despotic regime which Alexander III had maintained with regard to his children, a regime little calculated to develop in them independence of judgment, tenacity of will, candour of thought and action, or any other requisite of a strong personality. Probably Alexander's rough regime was what rendered Nicholas also so prone to vacillation and secretiveness, and so indifferently able to refuse a request, to keep a promise, or to follow advice, whether tendered or sought. Once, in a letter dated 12 January, 1906, he wrote to his mother: "Never have I known such a chameleon as Witte for changing his opinion. Everyone distrusts him." Verily Nicholas might have been speaking of himself!

However, if he lacked the qualities necessary to a leader, and was not of the calibre befitting a monarch, at least he possessed all the domestic virtues, and, like his father, was an exemplary husband, an excellent parent, and in general a well-bred, amiable, approachable, and even charming gentleman.

During 1890-1 his father sent him on a world tour.

And in the course of that tour, whilst in Japan, he was attacked by a native fanatic, and sustained a sword wound over the head. Then, after returning home, he for a while displayed an interest in two members of the Imperial Ballet; but not long afterwards, in 1894, the year when his father died, he married Princess Alix of Hesse, who at the same time became, on conversion to Orthodoxy, Alexandra Fedorovna. The arrangement was neither a State affair nor a *mariage de convenance*, but a union born of a mutual affection which became ever stronger and stronger with the years, and set its stamp both upon the children of the bond and upon the family's domestic life. As in the preceding reign, that life was *bourgeois* pure and simple, with every item of news proving of family interest. How well one can imagine the flutter, for instance, when the Grand Duke Cyril, the Tsar's cousin, married the divorced wife of Ernest, Duke of Hesse, the empress's brother! Grave indeed was the empress's vexation at the event, for she was very strict of principle, and had been made more so by her Puritan grandmother, the English Queen Victoria. In her view Cyril's conduct constituted a challenge, an insult, to the family at large. Insistently she urged that her husband should strip the grand duke of title, service standing, and share of family income, and then send him out of the country. But in the end things quietened down, and the only tangible outcome was involvement of the empress in undying enmity at the hands of the grand duke's mother, the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna—known to the imperial circle, as a rule, as "Aunt Miechen." And the same sort of thing occurred when the Grand Duke Paul, the Tsar's uncle, married the divorced wife (Countess Hohenfelsen) of a General Pistolkers. And the same again when a few years later the Grand Duke Michael, the Tsar's brother, also proposed for himself a morganatic union. In each case

the empress demanded that the culprit should have meted out to him the utmost severity of treatment, on the ground that he had disgraced his rank, prejudiced the whole family, and set a bad precedent. Naturally the Court for a while, for the first ten years of the reign, remained an exemplary instance of such institutions; but thereafter it was led by domestic and dynastic anxieties to undergo a deterioration, a disjointment. At the same time, this in no way affected the empress's and her daughters' personal characters. Undoubted proof of the fact exists in the sincere, simple-hearted diary and letters which they left behind them. No, the misfortune came of the circumstance that for long a male child was denied to the imperial couple, and that therefore they adopted foolish, extravagant lines of action possible only for persons as credulous, as unsophisticated, and as staunch to a religious faith as they were, unable to understand it aright or to apply it with wisdom. This was particularly true of the empress. Like many another convert to Orthodoxy from another creed, she assimilated the mentality of Orthodoxy to a point tending at times to excess. And if we add to that an inherited Protestant bent conjoined with a peculiarly morbid and neurotic type of illuministic mysticism, and the fact that side by side with the new faith there came to stand also the ancient traditions and the archaic beliefs still held by the Russian Court, inevitably tending to foster that mysticism, and likewise the fact that ever the foregoing factors were emphasized by a mother's natural, womanly yearning for an heir to be vouchsafed to her, and then for that heir to be kept alive and whole, we shall not experience so very much difficulty in understanding how it became possible for interested persons to use the two perfectly legitimate, intelligible aspirations just named towards persuasion of the imperial couple to heed various "magic healers," and the rest, as potential

realizers of the maternal longings of the one parent, and of the paternal ambition of the other. Successively, in this fashion, there wormed their way to Court a monk named Anthony, a freakish gnome named Mitia Kuliaba, who could utter no sounds save inarticulate bellowings, and a quack physician named Philip, whom the Grand Duchess Militza¹ had "discovered" at Lyons. But, inasmuch as this latter impostor at least held a medical diploma of some sort, he was thought quite competent to administer such empirical treatment as was obtainable through "entry into mediumistic communication with the spirit of Alexander III," and through reception thence of guidance and incantations infallibly bound to satisfy the imperial desires. And after the empress had become supposedly enceinte again, but this time found the symptoms to be merely the result of a nervous enlargement, and seen her hopes of an heir once more dashed, the imperial couple, having proved the artifices of the living to be impotent, turned for the same purpose to the dead, and went from monastery to monastery where reputedly miraculous icons and relics were preserved, and in one case even had an eighteenth-century anchorite of the name of Seraphin canonized, and his remains borne in solemn procession by a party including the Tsar himself.

At last, just a year after the last-mentioned event, the empress did indeed have a male child born to her. And a most comely child at that. But in him, at the same time, he had, besides comeliness, the seeds of the Hesse family's hereditary disease, hæmophilia. This disease, a malady transmissible through the females of the family, but fastening only upon the males, had already deprived the empress of a grandfather, two nephews, and a brother. So was it likely that her son should be passed by?

¹ Wife of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaievitch—third son of Nicholas I, brother of Alexander III, and uncle of Nicholas II.

The medical faculty was consulted. All that it could say was that for the disease no cure whatsoever was possible. And then, in their despair, the imperial couple returned to seers and quacks. The first magician to try his hand, and fail, was a fellow named Papus. And, next, a monk named Iliador proved unsuccessful. For something altogether superior clearly was needed. And that something altogether superior materialized at last in Rasputin.

The Russian Court from earliest days kept oddities, "wise fools," *klikuchis* (unintelligible babblers), and the like, on hand. Alexander I held communication with members of the *Khlisti* (Self-Flagellators) and *Skoptsi* (Self-Castrators) sects, and Nicholas I used to consult an Ivan Koreicha, and Alexander III often resorted to John of Kronstadt, a priest with a fashionable following whose "miracles" attracted to him pilgrims and sick by the thousand. But there was this difference between those persons and Rasputin, that, whereas the former were never admitted to politics, were never consulted when a minister had to be chosen, or the text of an *ukaz* to be framed, or any matter beyond the religious, superstitious, and psychical-therapeutical spheres to be considered, Rasputin became also the Throne's private adviser.

Before Rasputin obtained his footing in the Russian Court he had, a mere drunken, lecherous peasant, spent his days in vagrancy, with monasteries for his usual halting-places. In him, however, he certainly had a prodigious, and a very peculiar, store of magnetic energy; and by offering to try the effects of this energy upon the Tsarevitch he won the empress's favour in the first instance, and by assuring her subsequently that if ever he should have to leave Court again the throne would fall with his departure he consolidated his favoured position in the second. Eventually he did appear to work a "miracle," for one day the bedridden Tsarevitch

arose, and assuredly, for a while, was able to walk. And on another occasion, when for some reason or another he had forbidden the Tsarevitch further to use his, the Tsarevitch's, usual playroom for his games, it happened that on the very next day a great lustre in that room crashed to the floor, and almost certainly would have killed the boy if he had been present. Who can wonder that after these two "portents" the empress took Rasputin to the family's bosom, and made him her constant friend and mentor?

Yet we should do wrong to stress Rasputin's political rôle unduly. True, he could procure that protégés of his should be invited to Court, and that persons should, on his recommendation, receive the posts which they desired; but still things would in any case have gone awry, for the governmental machine was now become so much scrap iron, and the State completely lacked men of boldness and energy, men of intellectual independence, men capable of co-operation, men willing to take the patriotic, rather than the political or the bureaucratic, view. It was a condition of affairs, too, not limited wholly to Nicholas's regime. It showed itself equally when he was gone—it received eloquent illustration in the Provisional Government evolved from the Tsarist regime's ruins.

These, then, were the causes of the downfall of the empire. But, astounding though certain of the causes were, they stand eclipsed by the fact that to the end the Government of Nicholas succeeded in persuading Europe that Russia was still stable and strong.

When Nicholas ascended the throne he made no liberal promises. After saying in the stereotyped formula that he wished his father's policy to be maintained and the autocracy upheld, he added that "it is useless to indulge in dreams of *zemstvos* taking part in the management of the State," and influenced by Pobiedonostsev, refused an asked-for relaxation of

the Press laws. His reign from the first included death and disturbance, for on his coronation day, for a beginning, a huge multitude which had assembled on the Khodinski Plain¹ for the usual distribution of coronation gifts suddenly surged forward owing to bad marshalling, against some booths which had been erected on that uneven and gully-seamed expanse, and caused a crush resulting in thousands of casualties: whilst later in the day a demonstration of students and workmen who had seized upon the foregoing catastrophe as an excuse for disturbance met with absolutely merciless suppression.

That autumn the emperor and empress toured Europe—stayed with the Austrian Emperor in Vienna, met the Kaiser at Breslau, and visited the Courts of England and France. In France Nicholas was accorded a particularly enthusiastic welcome, and the visits were returned a year later by Francis Joseph, William, and Félix Faure. During the latter's stay in St. Petersburg, also, Nicholas uttered the fateful words which France had so long been hoping to hear. Those words were the words: "We two allied nations." However, Nicholas added a remark that the main purpose of the Franco-Russian alliance in question was purely pacific, and, next, to emphasize his desire for peace, invited the European and other States to meet at The Hague, and discuss the matter of limitation of armaments. Twenty-eight such States accepted the invitation, and, assembling in May 1899, held there debates which extended over two months, but owing to England's and Germany's dissent when the Tsar suggested non-addition to military forces and peace time budgets for a period of five years, came to nothing. The end was a dissolution of the conference with a pious opinion that limitation of armaments was desirable, but—not feasible.

When the twentieth century opened it found Russia

¹ An open space outside Moscow.

suffering from economic depression due to over-production, and from unrest born partly of the Government's policy of Russifying Poland, Finland, and the Baltic Provinces, partly of student demonstrations and working-class strikes, partly of Russia's Chinese and Korean policy, and partly of the doings of the new Socialists, a class composed mostly of intellectuals, and working to convert the proletariat's purely professional discontent into a political discontent. Nevertheless the Socialists had differences existent even in their own ranks, for they could not agree upon tactics. The social democrats, on the one hand, were for the "class war" advocated of Marx, and opposed to immediate or summary political action: whereas the social revolutionaries, on the other, were for immediate revolution and terrorism, since only thus, they said, could social readjustment also become possible, and the autocracy be made to give place to "Sovereignty of the People." Eventually the latter party—more especially its *Boevaia Druzhina*, or "Fighting Squad"—decided definitely to resume attempts upon the lives of ministers and governors. And this the Government sought to counter by commissioning von Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, to resuscitate the *Okhrana* (Political Police Force), to strengthen it with a corps of *agents-provocateurs*, and to organize, or at all events to allow to be organized, a series of Jewish *pogroms*. Unfortunately, this scheme of killing one thing with another resulted just as much in the latter being killed by the former. Meanwhile the Chief of Police in Moscow formed a "Workers' Association" in that city, and provided it with "reading-rooms" at the Government's expense. But soon a deputation of Muscovite owners of factories came to St. Petersburg, and complained to Witte that the police had taken to stirring up their own working-hands against them! This caused Witte to fall out with von Plehve, and, as the emperor had recently discovered von Plehve

to have been, for two years past, furnishing him with mendacious reports, he sided with Witte, and von Plehve thereupon attempted reprisals, but, possessing many influential enemies at Court, enemies leagued with the directing officials of the *Okhrana*, was allowed by the latter to have a plot hatched against him by the "Fighting Squad," and fell mortally wounded with a bomb on the Ismailovski Prospekt on 29 July, 1904.

Russia also had external troubles at this period, for clouds had long been gathering on the Far Eastern horizon, and at last they broke in the Japanese War. It came about thus. Nicholas had always made his foreign policy devote much less attention to the Nearer East than to the Farther. First of all he had, in imitation of the German Emperor, compelled China to give him Port Arthur for a Far Eastern stronghold, on the ground that there alone, as regards the Far East, was there an ice-free harbour. And then he had manœuvred to annex a portion of Manchuria adjoining Corea, and permitted formation of, in connection with that, a "Yalou Company" which, ostensibly a timber-trading corporation, numbered even members of the imperial family amongst its shareholders, and had at its back Admiral Alexeiev and the Far Eastern squadron. This in time had interested the Japanese Government as well, and led it to ask for explanations: and now, after for long past receiving only elusive or mendacious replies, the Japanese Government, on 4 February, 1904, sent some torpedo boats to Port Arthur, and sank some Russian vessels whose commanding officers were ashore at a gubernatorial dance. Of course the result was war outright, a conflict born solely of Russia's rash, hazardous Far Eastern policy. Well, Russia waged it as she usually has done such affairs. That is to say, she waged it nonchalantly, and with no general plan of operations to go upon, but only a persistent under-estimation of the enemy's strength. At once her army's and her military

system's organic defects leaped to the eye. For though her troops were good at repelling direct attacks, they never could quite tear themselves from the railway. Also, they proved faulty in manœuvring—they kept letting themselves get into bad positions, be turned, and forced to retreat. But the worst feature of all was the atmosphere reigning amongst the General Staff. Everywhere incredulity and distrust were the rule there. Should a general at the front apply for additional reinforcements, at once the staff declared his statement of losses to be exaggerated. True, generals there were who made such applications their very first step, but they were the exception rather than the rule—usually commanding officers on the spot forbore to ask for help until such help had become veritably a necessity. The result of refusals of reinforcements was constant, protracted stoppages. Also, officers both at the front and in the rear abused the rules governing employment of orderlies and servants: some detached for their personal use three servants or more. Also, young officers would be relegated to the rear, or to mere auxiliary service, and bearded dotards be sent to direct the firing line. Again, this wastage of man-power had added to it wastage of munitions, and, formed with the ease with which officers in high positions could immobilize railway rolling-stock for their personal use, the campaign's supremely distinguishing feature. From the first were Admiral Alexeiev and his staff given a separate railway train, despite that that train seldom was required to travel, and always had running in front of it an armoured "pilot," and never spent a night save halted in a station, where it would remain until the following day was well advanced, and meanwhile, seeing that Alexeiev had no fancy for having his slumbers disturbed with whistlings, shuntings, and so forth, caused all the neighbouring lines to become blocked with held-up troop and ordnance and other convoys.

The same with General Kuropatkin when he had taken Alexeiev's place—he too had to have a train, and so had his chief-of-staff, and so had the general of every army corps, until there was scarcely anybody *without* a train. Lastly, as these trains provided distinctly comfortable quarters, the staff became reluctant to leave the railway line at a distance: and this led to the operations constantly tending to confine themselves to the railway zone alone.

Another result of the campaign was very nearly to upset the peace of Europe as well, and set Russia at odds both with Germany and with England. At first the German Emperor manifested great sympathy with Russia in the conflict. At length, indeed, his chancellor, von Bülow, had to remind him that Frederick II and William I at least never broke their heads for other people. "But," cried William, "you speak as a politician only, whereas I am a sovereign. The Tsar is bidding fair to compromise all us monarchs of the first rank. The Yellow Peril confronts us. Never before have the white race and the Christianity of Europe been so menaced. If the Russians should give way now, the yellow race will be in Moscow and Posen within twenty years at the most." Nevertheless William eventually found himself forced to rest satisfied with benevolent neutrality, and with a letter of 11 August, 1904, in which he said: "I am convinced that one day we Germans too must reckon with Japan. Of course, the Russians will help us all right, but they had far better beat the Japanese *now*." With that, William carefully exacted of Russia a *quid pro quo*—he did so through means of a commercial treaty so advantageous to Germany that Witte, Russia's plenipotentiary in the matter, was led to remark that Russia's business seemed merely to be to yield to Germany's demands. Then, to continue Nicholas's education in self-subordination to William's self, William wired: "Russian cruiser has stopped our

steamship *Scandia*. This is clear violation of international law, and almost act of piracy. High time that such acts were forbidden to your commanders of cruisers. Else, international complications might ensue." And when Tschirski, Russian ambassador in Berlin, sought to prevent dispatch of this telegram the Kaiser retorted: "But I wish to read the Tsar a lesson." The "lesson" hurt Nicholas certainly, but less so than it might have done had he not then been preoccupied with the problem of how to get the Baltic fleet brought to anchor at Port Arthur before the latter should capitulate.

Originally this idea of the Baltic fleet proceeding to the Far East sprang to birth in the mad, meddlesome brain of a certain retired marine officer. Then it was taken up by a section of the Peterburgan Press. Finally, consent to it was given by an emperor who did not even know how his naval forces lay disposed. For commander of the squadron Admiral Rozhdestvenski was chosen. And the squadron itself consisted of four or five disparate ironclads, added to some other vessels of very little true fighting value. It stood condemned in advance by experts and its officers. For fuel a contract was made with Herr Ballin, director of the Hamburg-American Steamship Company, and the coal was to be provided at stated ports by hulks owned by that corporation. At first the Japanese Press declared this to constitute violation of neutrality, and so did the Press of England, but Herr Ballin retorted that it was from the latter country itself that the coal originally would come, and the same as regards the colliers of conveyance.

So on 15 October, 1904, Rozhdestvenski and his ships weighed anchor. Two days earlier it had come to the ears of the German Government that Japanese agents were mining the Sound and the Kattegat. And though that Government had kept the information to itself, Rozhdestvenski also would seem to have heard the news

—at all events nothing else can well explain the fact that when, on the evening of 21 October, his ships arrived off the Dogger Bank nervousness made him fire upon some harmless English fishing-boats hailing from the town of Hull. At once, of course, an English explosion followed, and only the good offices of France, added to King Edward VII's well-known pacific disposition, prevented the existent Russo-Japanese conflict from becoming complicated with the addition of an Anglo-Russian one. As it was, things did not go beyond preliminary mobilization of an English squadron.

The Russo-Japanese War ended in signature of a treaty at Portsmouth, in the United States, on 16 August, 1905. Through it Witte, the Russian representative, at least procured reduction of the Japanese Government's original demands, and received the title of count as a reward.

A month earlier there took place the famous interview between the Tsar and the Kaiser at Bjoerkoe, in Finland. Originally arranged for the purpose merely of exchanging views in general, the interview ended ¹ with conclusion of a formal agreement between the two sovereigns. Wilhelm subsequently (25 July, 1905) wrote to von Bülow the following account of the affair:

As soon as I appeared the Tsar clasped me to his breast as though I had been his own brother, and never for a moment ceased to look at me with eyes of gratitude and acknowledgment. And his suite too displayed such a cordiality as I had never before experienced, and Benckendorf actually dropped the glass from his eye as I offered him my hand, and the young heir (who had specially been brought for the occasion) was all gaiety as well. Then, with the remark that he was burning to discuss things, the Tsar took me apart. And when we had lit cigarettes we plunged *in medias res*. I found him to be thoroughly pleased with the Morocco agreement. He said that it

¹ The actual scene of the interview was on board the Russian Imperial yacht *Standart*.

had cleared the way entirely for good, lasting French relations. And he applauded, too, when I expressed a hope that those relations might soon flower into an *entente* outright, or even into an actual "agreement" * ¹ Next, I remarked that the recent English agitation had all been in vain, since the English had wholly failed to make France cross her sword with ours, either now or in the future, about the territories of my Empire.² Firmly the Tsar replied: "Yes, that I saw. It is quite clear. The Alsace-Lorraine question is closed once for all, thank God!" * Then the conversation turned altogether upon England. And I could see that the Tsar was feeling very bitter against that country and its king. He said that in his opinion Edward VII was "mostly mischief maker," * a disloyal intriguer, and, at that, the most dangerous intriguer existing. Well, naturally I felt bound to assent to this, and reply that no one could have suffered more through Edward's machinations than I myself had done of late years, since his penchant for contriving everywhere, with every Power, "some little thing, some little agreement," * amounted almost to a passion. Thereupon the Tsar struck the table with his fist, and cried: "Well, I can only say, he shall not get one from me, and never in my life against Germany or you, my word of honour on it!" *

Next day Nicholas received the Kaiser as effusively as before, and the two sovereigns, after breakfasting together, returned to the same subject, and particularly to what might be the relations existing between France and England. Continues the Kaiser's letter:

We kept saying to one another: "Is there anything really concluded between those two?"—"For my part," at last I went on, "I do believe there to be a 'little agreement' * in being, for there you see Edward's pet foible. But probably it does not contain the actual word 'ally.'" The Tsar lowered his head at that. For a moment he seemed absolutely confounded. Then, again straightening

¹ Asterisks attached to words or passages in this letter denote that in the original German such words or passages were written by the Kaiser in English.

² The Kaiser is referring to Alsace and Lorraine.

himself, he cried: "That is too bad! What shall I do in the disagreeable situation?" * Upon this I felt the fateful moment to have come. I remarked that, as France, Russia's ally, had not consulted the Tsar, or sought his assent, before entering upon a policy of free hand and counter-assurances, the Tsar could consider himself equally free. Would he, therefore, be doing wrong if he were to follow France's example in the matter? "*Suum cuique*," I added. "How, in point of fact, would it be if now *you* and *I* were to conclude a 'little agreement' * between ourselves? Remember that we thought of doing so last winter, but that Delcassé and our then strained relations with France prevented. But all that is past now, and a renewal of friendship with France would remove our last difficulty." "Oh, yes, to be sure!" the Tsar replied. "I remember it well, but I forget the contents of it.¹ What a pity I have not got it here!" * Then I said: "But it happens that *I* have got it here—a copy of it in my very pocket." The Tsar seized my arm. Leading me aside into the cabin of his late father, he shut all the doors, and then said: "Show it me, please!" * And, with the words, his usually sleepy eyes flushed with excitement. I drew the envelope from my pocket, unfolded the sheet, and laid it before the Tsar—laid it upon the late Tsar Alexander's writing-table. Before us, as I did so, I saw a portrait of the empress-mother, whilst around were photographs of Fredensburg and Copenhagen. I placed the sheet before the Tsar—then waited. Once, twice, and thrice he read it through (I have communicated to you its text already). And meanwhile I sat sending up fervent prayers that God might, of His goodness, aid us in that hour, and direct the young sovereign aright. Complete silence reigned. Outside, the sea plashed, and the sun was sending still, joyous beams into the quiet interior of the cabin. Opposite there could be seen the *Hohenzollern's* motionless, gleaming-white bulk, and the Imperial Standard fluttering in the morning breeze. Just as I was conning the words "God with us!" on the black cross of the standard the Tsar's voice said beside me: "That is quite excellent.

¹ Of, that is to say, the "little agreement" discussed during the previous winter.

I agree." * How my heart beat! Yet I preserved my wits. Quite casually I said: "Then would you care to *sign* this agreement? It would at least make a nice souvenir of our present interview." He read through the sheet a fourth time. Then he said firmly: "Yes, I will." * I opened the inkstand—handed him a pen, and he signed "Nicholas" steadily, and tendered the pen to myself, and I too signed. Just as I was raising my head again he caught, crushed, me in his arms with extraordinary fervour. Then he said: "I thank God, and I thank you. This will be of most beneficial consequences for my country and yours. You are Russia's only real friend in the world. I have felt that through the whole war, and I know it." * Ah, I could feel tears rising to my eyes, and perspiration coming out on my forehead and my back! Yes, and I reflected how fittingly might Frederick William III and Queen Louise¹ and my grandfather and Nicholas I have been present in that hour, yet that in any case they must be looking down upon us, and rejoicing. Lastly, I remarked that it might be desirable to have two counter-signatures affixed to the document, as that was customary with instruments of the sort, and he agreed to this, and we sent for Tschirski and Admiral Birilev, and communicated to them the text when they arrived, and they signed it. The old sailor grasped my hand in silence. Then he kissed it with profound respect.

When returning home from the United States after signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth, Witte turned aside, and called upon Wilhelm at his hunting-box of Rominten, and for the first time learnt both of the conclusion of the agreement of Bjoerkoe and of the fact that France later was to be asked to become a third party to it. Well, Witte had all along advocated a political constellation of the sort, so straightway he expanded into praises and congratulations. Then there struck him an idea which commended itself also to the Kaiser:

¹ Frederick William III's consort (1776–1810), and mother of Wilhelm I, the Kaiser's grandfather. She was greatly beloved of the people, and especially because of her encouragement of them after the disaster of Jena.

and that was that, as France was to be asked to adhere to the instrument, she had better not be bothered with anything else in the meanwhile—least of all with such a comparatively minor consideration as the Morocco question. At once Wilhelm telegraphed to Chancellor von Bülow to make concessions as regards the programme for the conference at Algeciras.

But as Witte was not at the same time allowed to read the Bjoerkoe agreement's actual text, there resulted the following. On reaching St. Petersburg he went to see Count Lamsdorf, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. And when the latter asked him: "Do you approve of the Bjoerkoe agreement?" and Witte in reply not only said that he did, but proceeded to advance his favourite thesis of the advantages potentially derivable from a Russo-Franco-German understanding, Lamsdorf suddenly broke in: "But have you *read* the agreement?" Witte, of course, could only respond in the negative. In silence Lamsdorf handed him a copy. Witte's memoirs subsequently stated:

The instant that I began upon the reading I realized the cause of Lamsdorf's annoyance. For the agreement not only bound Russia to join with Germany in mutual self-defence against *any* European Power, but it also bound Russia to endeavour by every means to gain France's adherence to the union. At once I said that the document must be cancelled at all costs, since I would rather see the Japanese War begin again, and the Treaty of Portsmouth be left unratified, than, through ratification of the latter, the Bjoerkoe agreement be rendered potentially operative.

It is old history now how Lamsdorf and Witte united their wills and their arguments until Nicholas reluctantly consented to make of the Bjoerkoe agreement a cancelled document.

The Russo-Japanese War never became really popular in Russia, but, rather, increased the people's existent discontent. True, certain politicians and others

cherished passing hopes that the Manchurian disasters might render the Tsar conscious that internal reforms instead must be granted; but eventually even these hopes proved vain, seeing that though, after von Plehve's assassination, the liberal-minded Prince Sviatopolk-Mirski was made Minister of the Interior, and at once abolished the repressive regime in favour of what he called a "dictatorship of the heart," thirty-two provincial *zemstvos* demanded thereupon such "utterly impossible" things as firstly, freedom of speech, of person, of print, of domicile, of meeting, of union, and of administration; secondly, formation of provincial electoral bodies; and thirdly, convention of a Constituent Assembly. At once the Government paused in its stride. At once Nicholas issued an *ukaz* sharply distinguishing "the people's true needs" from "vague aspirations on the part only of a few," and declaring ministers alone competent to suggest reforms, and accusing the *zemstvos* of "turbulent debate," and of "preferment of wholly inadmissible claims," and of "provocation of demonstrations to which a people still holding unto the ancient bases of the imperial order is a stranger." Thus the manifesto left the more impatient advocates of reform no alternative but either to continue waiting for improvement or to foreclose the situation at once. Of these two courses they chose the latter. After a noisy, confused meeting the *zemstvo* of Moscow passed a resolution that the bureaucratic regime ought to come to an end, and an assembly of the progressive parties in St. Petersburg condemned the war, and demanded universal and secret suffrage, and a priest named Gapon, head of a "Society of Russian Workers" which he had formed, and which had come to number some twenty-five thousand members, planned to bring a procession of those members before the Winter Palace itself, so that the Tsar might learn at first hand the reasons which they had for grievances and claims.

Unfortunately a mistake was made in that, after conversation with some of the social democrats of the capital, Gapon let himself communicate to the contemplated demonstration something of the nature of a challenge by writing word to the Minister of the Interior that, though the demonstrators wished to make none but peaceful representations, make those peaceful representations they would at all costs. The Tsar, therefore, declined to come to St. Petersburg (he was then at Tsarskoe Selo) to receive the demonstrators, and when the procession reached the open square before the palace it found its way barred by police and troops, and, on still pressing forward a little, was fired upon by the troops, and sustained several casualties inclusive of women and children as well as men. Of course this massacre of an unarmed crowd played straight into the revolutionaries' hands, and enabled them more than ever to inflame public opinion, and to start strikes in factories. Finally the "Fighting Squad" went further still, and carried out attempts upon the Grand Duke Sergius (who was then Governor of Moscow) and some provincial governors:¹ and upon that the Tsar sought to appease the conspirators with a fresh announcement that it was his "intention to summon certain worthy persons whom the people shall have chosen, and to entrust to those persons participation in the preliminary preparation and debate of all future legislative measures," and then instituted, towards having this done, a commission under Bulygin, Minister of the Interior,

¹Amongst victims of successful Terrorist attempts at the period were Launitz, Chief of the St. Petersburg Police; Pavlov, Chief Military Prosecutor; von Plehve, Minister of the Interior; the Grand Duke Sergius, Governor of Moscow; Sipiaghin, Minister of the Interior; and General Bogdanovitch, Governor of Ufa. Unsuccessful attempts were made upon Prince Obolenski, Governor of Kharkov; Pobiedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod; Klegels, Governor of Kiev; Durnovo, Minister of the Interior; Trepov, Chief of the St. Petersburg Police; and Stolypin, Prime Minister.

and by edict conceded religious tolerance to *Raskolniks*, Jews, and all foreign confessions. Nevertheless the popular ferment not only continued, but grew. So also did the strikes. And so also did the peasants' clamour for the land, until in every single rural locality scenes of pillage and murder were witnessed, and there came into being a "Union of Land Workers," run on communistic lines.

The reins thus slackened, the Government had no choice but to make further concessions yet. In June 1905 the Tsar again affirmed that "immutably is it Our will to convoke Popular Representatives." And in August he issued a decree formally establishing a constitution, and, with the decree, a manifesto that "now is the time come to summon Our Elected Representatives, and bid them effectively, and in permanence, share in the legislative task." Yet even these steps failed to satisfy the hot-headed. The latter merely retorted that at least *they* were not going to be put off with an *ersatz* constitution, and, instead, demanded abolition of the fundamental law upon which the autocracy rested—no less. Prominent in this movement was a "*Soviet of Workers' Delegates*" which had for joint presidents a Jew officially named Braunstein, but usually known as Trotsky, and one Khrustalov-Nossar. And at last, the more to intimidate the Government, this *Soviet* called for a general strike, and the order for this demonstration, the first in Russia's experience, was so generally obeyed that the October of 1905 beheld the empire suddenly deprived of railways, posts, telegraphs, tramways, and all food beyond day-by-day rations. Nicholas describes the situation very well in a letter which he sent to his mother (then staying in Denmark) from Peterhof. The letter is dated 19 October, and, after picturing the stoppage of all means of communication and the spread of the strikes movement even to the universities, goes on to accuse the police of inertia, to

describe "my Ministers" as "huddled together like so many rain-soaked fowls," and to inform the letter's recipient that the capital has been placed under Trepov as sole governor, divided into sections and sectional commands, garrisoned with troops which are at once to fire if attacked, and placarded with proclamations that disturbances will be mercilessly suppressed. "One feels just as before a more than ordinarily fearful thunderstorm. Everyone's nerves are at the last pitch of tension." Finally, says the Tsar, he has consented to Witte becoming President of the Council of Ministers and using, on his own discretion, any force which may be rendered necessary. "As for the precise considerations which have prompted me to this terrible solution, they do not admit of being set forth in a letter."

All this preceded issue of the famous manifesto of 30 October. That manifesto bade ministers "immediately substantiate the emperor's will for according unto his subjects one and all of the immutable fundamentals of civil liberty." In other words, the ministers were at once to organize the long-promised State *Duma*, and to make it consist of representatives of every social class, and to set those representatives to the task of elaborating all future legislation. But still the people did not cease from their demands for universal suffrage and a constituent assembly; and this led the Government next to try calling to its aid such supporters of the old regime as had formed themselves into such associations as "The Union of Russian Men" ("The Black Hundreds," to call it by its older historical title), "The Union of Monarchist Landowners," "The Society of Bearers of Religious Banners," and the rest, so that those associations might organize demonstrations in favour of the Tsar and his helpers; but the revolutionaries, and especially a body known as "The Union of Factory Workers," merely retorted with fresh demands—in this

case for abolition of the death penalty, and for cancellation of the existing state of siege. And when these demands were refused they called another general strike, but this time procured only partial obedience to the order, whilst their "*Soviet* of Workers' Delegates" suffered imprisonment of forty-nine of its members. Then the committee of the Peterburgan social democrats took a hand in the business, but, as an armed insurrection in the capital did not appear possible, tried one in Moscow instead—decreed a general strike in that city, and armed some of its workers with old revolvers and rifles, and then sent them to spread themselves over the wards, erect barricades, and attempt occupation of such important points as the railway station, the telegraph office, and so on. But the Government, having sent for, in its turn, the Semenovski Guards of St. Petersburg and a line regiment belonging to the sector of Warsaw (for it did not care to trust to the Muscovite garrison alone), proved victorious in the struggle, and then, both in Moscow and elsewhere, instituted "reinforced protection"—that is to say, sent "repressive detachments" wherever rioting or *jacquerie* had broken out, and commissioned those detachments to effect the usual hangings and shootings. At last, however, the Government did convoke the first State *Duma* which the empire yet had known. But all too soon did that *Duma* prove intractable, and have to be dissolved. And the second *Duma*, on Stolypin offering it a programme of a purely non-political character, refused to follow his lead, and he dissolved it on his own initiative, and then laid before the Tsar a scheme for a new electoral system in connection with such bodies. As for the third *Duma*, it did at least live long enough to hear Kokovtsev utter the historical (and encouraging!) words: "In Russia, thank God, we have no such thing as a Parliament." Then (in 1912) it expired. Lastly, a fourth *Duma* was dissolved by, in the Tsar's room,

Lenin. And that *Duma's* passing marked the end of Russia's brief, shadowy Parliamentary regime.

In 1911 Stolypin was assassinated at Kiev, and thenceforth the Government jogged to its doom amid terrorist acts, revolutionary demands, industrial strikes, and official hesitancy. "Russia's population," Witte had said some seven years earlier, "is Russian only to the extent of fifty-six per cent. The rest is made up of Jews, Finns, Germans, Poles, Armenians, and Tartars, all of which sections are chronically hostile to the Government because of its policy. And now here are the fifty-six per cent as well shouting: 'What has the Government done for us?' Anarchists, revolutionaries, constitutionalists—all alike live but to propagate their several theories, and everyone is losing his balance, and daily the Government is growing of less account. Once upon a time a minister might be hated, but at least he was not despised. Once upon a time a Government might be loved by nobody, but at least it was heeded. Once upon a time, if men tried to strangle a Government, they did not make the attempt with a sneer. But now both *zemstvos* and the nobility wish to abolish the autocracy, and, as for the waiting masses, their one desire is to deprive the landowners of their property, and possess that property themselves."

To return, however, to foreign policy: formation of the Franco-Russian *entente* which later became a Franco-Russian alliance at all events gave Russia a sense of having someone in Europe to back her, and before long the fact incited her to fresh activity in the East, and, on the Eastern question re-arising through a Turkish massacre of Armenian Christians, and through England appealing to the Powers to join her in compelling the Sultan to reforms, Russia ranged herself in opposition to England on the ground that, to quote the phrase used by Lobanov-Rostovski, Russia's ambassador in Constantinople, "we do not want to see Armenia become

a second Bulgaria." At the same time, this caution on Russia's part was not wholly inexcusable, for never for a moment since the day when Ferdinand of Coburg had arrived upon the scene had Bulgaria ceased to be a thorn in Russia's side, despite amends made by Ferdinand when he had Boris, his heir, baptized into Orthodoxy,¹ and when he engineered a Russo-Austrian *rapprochement* which enabled those two Powers to preserve order in the Balkans whilst the Greco-Turkish War² was in progress. The main condition upon which that Russo-Austrian *rapprochement* was based was that in theory a bisecting line should be drawn down the Balkan Peninsula, and that Russia should thenceforth possess a "sphere of influence" on the eastern, or Bulgarian, side of the line in question, and Austria a "sphere of influence" on the western, or Serbo-Albanian, side of it. Then Kuropatkin was sent to Vienna for the purpose stated, and despite its *naïveté* (for, with or without Russia's assent, Austria had long ruled Servia through the Obrenovitch dynasty and come to look upon the principality as her vassal), Russia took it seriously, and in 1905 signed the necessary treaty at Murstzeg. But presently the disasters in Manchuria threw her back again upon her Pan-Slavophil dreams, and she decided again to try and oust the Turk from Constantinople, as a means towards free passage for her commerce through the Straits. This, of course, aroused fresh unrest in the East, whilst at the same time Austro-Russian relations deteriorated because of the Austrian chancellor, Aehrenthal, happening in an important regard to misunderstand the Russian Foreign Minister, Izvolski. The cause of the rupture was that Austria proposed to help Russia with respect to the Turkish Straits question

¹ In 1896. Ferdinand had, in 1887, been placed upon the Bulgarian throne in succession to the deposed Prince Alexander.

² This war, fought in 1897, ended with a Treaty of Constantinople.

if Russia would consent to let Austria annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that during the negotiations for the bargain Izvolski, on Russia's behalf, omitted to fix a term during which Russia should first sound the Powers on the subject, and that, as Aehrenthal had, of course, no reason to feel himself bound to delay, he annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina immediately, or at all events on only a few days' notice, and thereby rendered Izvolski's contemplated diplomatic steps impossible. In great dudgeon Izvolski thereupon broke off the negotiations, returned to his Slavophil line of policy, refused to resume the negotiations when requested, and set about doing all he could to detach Serbia from Vienna, and bring into being a Serbo-Bulgarian *entente* against Turkey. By 1910 the *entente* had become a fact, and the gist of its conditions was that, in the event of Serbia and Bulgaria getting the better of Turkey, those two principalities should divide Macedonia between them, and Bulgaria not be called upon to halt in her demarcation of new boundaries until Salonika should be reached, and Serbia not called upon to halt until Albania should stand included in her portion. But inasmuch as the arrangement did not specify, in addition, the line which Serbia was to take with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Austria had earlier annexed, the whole dream of a Slavonic State extending from the Bosphorus to the Ægean fell to the ground, and the dreamers had to look elsewhere for a chance of its ultimate realization.

As a first step they embroiled Russia with Austria outright. And though, even so, things might not have gone beyond the sphere of diplomatic intrigue, Germany chose to develop it into an affair involving all Europe. Moreover, Russia's attitude was dictated to her largely by the fact that an earlier political grouping had brought into being, first of all a triple alliance between Austria, Germany, and Italy, and then, as a result of the alliance, an accord between France and Russia, and an accord

between France and England, and three Anglo-Russian Conventions which, in August 1907, settled all outstanding Anglo-Russian differences over Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet, and, lastly, a triple *entente* (not alliance as yet) between England, France, and Russia which Edward VII made known to all the world through visiting the Tsar during the June of 1908. In July 1914 the triple *entente* stood its testing well enough, but never to the day of their death will those who were in St. Petersburg at the time forget the anxiety of the position, an anxiety heightened rather than lessened by Sukhomlinov's (Minister of War) repetition of Lebœuf's¹ historic phrase: "We are ready to the last button." No one knew better than Sukhomlinov that his country stood utterly unprepared for a costly, and possibly a long-protracted, European war. Even the emperor hesitated to let his dominions go to feed the all-European conflagration. His hesitation was the greater because the subversive elements in those dominions were actively raising their heads again, and strikes once more becoming numerous. An account of the interview between the Tsar and his Foreign Minister (Sazonov) just before the general mobilization order was issued is given in the memoirs of M. Paléologue, the French ambassador. In those memoirs we read that during the night of 30 July the Tsar received the following telegram from the Kaiser:

Should Russia mobilize now against Austria-Hungary, the mission of mediation undertaken by me at your request will stand compromised, or even become impossible. The decision rests upon your shoulders alone. They alone must make themselves responsible for peace or for war.

The Tsar's representations to Sazonov centred upon the necessity of considering all the terrible consequences which might come of mobilization. "Think," he cried, "of the possible meaning of dispatching hundreds of

¹ Edmond Lebœuf (1809-88), Marshal of France. Fought in the Crimean and Franco-German campaigns.

thousands of men to their death!" To which Sazonov replied: "Your Majesty, neither you nor I need let our conscience reproach us, for your Majesty has done your utmost to spare the world this horror, and so also have I, your Majesty's Government. Diplomacy, I feel, has finished its work. Consider, also, the bare safety of the empire. If your Majesty should arrest the preliminaries to mobilization which are in progress already, you will avail nothing, and yet have dislocated the whole of Russia's military organization, and landed our allies in a difficulty, and altered by not a single second the moment chosen by Germany for outbreak of hostilities. Such a course would mean that when the war begins it would find us in utter disorder." So after further hesitation, further reflection, the emperor did bid Sazonov go downstairs to the private telephone office, and thence let Yaniuchkevitch, the head of the General Staff, have the order for mobilization *in toto*. The order left the telephone office at four o'clock exactly, and therefore M. Paléologue can only have heard of the event at quite a later hour, for as long after four o'clock as 4.31 he was telegraphing to his Government: "In reply to your telegram No. 453. Advised M. Sazonov this morning to avoid any military measure soever affording Germany pretext for mobilization."

The command given by the emperor came as a surprise even to highly placed persons in Russia. Admiral Grigorovitch (Minister of Marine), on hearing of it, at once exclaimed: "What? We go to war with Germany? Why, has the state of our crews been forgotten? We are no match at all for the German fleet. And as for the forts of Kronstadt, they will be as little use as our ships for protecting St. Petersburg from bombardment." And Maklakov, Minister of the Interior, said the same sort of thing whilst signing the necessary telegrams to the local authorities. Then he added: "Never will the war prove popular, for our

masses have revolution in their minds rather than victories over Germany." The greater was the general astonishment because all knew the small reliance to be placed upon Russia's military forces and commanders.

Nevertheless mobilization so far falsified expectations as to take place without any serious hitch. In the provinces no disorder at all occurred, if we except a few disturbances caused mostly by drunken Reservists, and speedily put an end to through the authorities placing an embargo upon liquor. But in the two capitals a certain amount of trouble did arise from street demonstrations, as vagabonds and hooligans of the sort who later blossomed into "Red Guards" paraded hither and thither, and shouted the *Internationale*, and others, people of patriotic bent, counter-paraded with icons and portraits of the Tsar. But when, at last, an attack was made upon the German Embassy under the very eyes of diplomats watching from the windows of the Hotel Astoria even the authorities felt constrained to do something in the matter, and there followed a total prohibition of further demonstrations, meetings, and processions.

Upon the Tsar's ministers and, later, the Provisional Government there must be placed quite as much responsibility for the disasters in the field which befell Russia as upon the people. The prime cause alike of the empire's downfall and of the shameful Peace of Brest-Litovsk was the prevalence amongst official personages of treason, venality, egotism, indifference, levity, and ignorance. True, it was soon indeed that the spirit of the people became permeated with weariness and discouragement, but this applies still more to the spirit of the upper circles, of the circles which mingled savage instincts with idealistic aspirations, luxurious tastes with intellectuality, and refinement with moral degradation. When the war began those circles entered upon it with light-hearted repetition of formulas

and "slogans," but with no foresight at all, and with no fixed resolve to win. Indeed, the at first vaunted "union of all classes" failed to survive even the first checks to Russia's arms. And then party strife revived again, with the Opposition blaming the Government, and the military authorities quarrelling as during the Japanese conflict, and sacrificing to personal grievances and ambitions both the chances of success and the lives of men. In fact, every one, from the Crown and the Government to the community, seemed to have forgotten Manchuria's lessons. A poem of the day entitled *August* shows us a Russian army departing for an unknown destination. Someone asks it, "Whither?" but the men make no reply. Just so did the soldiers of 1914 depart. Between them and their officers no relations beyond relations strictly of a formal character ever were formed. Their officers never sought to help them in their wrestlings with the questions which the war raised. No one, indeed, spoke freely to them save persons who had a particular interest in doing so—who were out to spread revolutionary propaganda. The officers themselves frequently did not know the cause of their fighting, or the goal to be attained. Yet still a Russian force could, even at the end of 1915, when everything in the world seemed lost, capture Erzeroum under circumstances of exceptional difficulty. And still, at that stage, a Russian force could once again pierce the Austro-Hungarian front. Verily does the Russian never know all of which he is capable, or all of which the next moment he will be the doer. Not for nothing has his country been called "the land of infinite possibilities."

So in course of time there arrived the revolution of March 1917. What was the immediate cause of that phenomenon? We can only reply that the immediate cause of it was a war completely throwing the machine of government out of gear, injuring the country in its

vital parts, filling every mind with perplexity and distrust, and re-arousing the Slavonic soul to its atavistic instincts of anarchy, cruelty, and negativism. At once the revolution converted Russia into one huge debating society engaged in discussing the relative merits of a constitutional monarchy, a liberal republic, and a socialistic state. And whilst Kerenski gesticulated from the roof of the verbal edifice, "strong men" of the Monk and Napoleon type *à la russe* surged ponderously about the basement, and the Peterburgan-attached diplomats, unable to see the position for the turmoil, kept pushing the country nearer and nearer to the abyss. Until at last a group which really had got a plan prepared grasped the supreme power, and the Bolshevik State came into being.

The first symptom of the revolution was a marked growth of strikes in factories, as, ostensibly, protests against the cost of living and the scarcity of food, but in reality as the result of trained agitators' and enemy agents' subterranean activity. Then these strikes degenerated into street scuffles and acts of sabotage. And when the Government ordered out troops the troops, consisting mostly of young reservists who had long been worked upon by intellectuals, time-expired soldiers, and persons looking to obtain lucrative office under a revolutionary Government, merely joined the rioters, and, in company with social dregs, proceeded to make themselves masters of the Petropavlovski Fortress, the central telegraph office, government buildings, and police stations, and to massacre all functionaries who had the hardihood to resist. Ultimately the hitherto Government, the Government of Prince Golitzin, handed in to a sovereign who was as good as abdicated its resignation. This was on 12 March. Later that day, at midnight, there came into being, under Rodzianko, president of the fourth and last *Duma*, an "Executive Committee" of that *Duma*, a body made up of, amongst

others, Kerenski, Tscheidzé, Miliukov, Konovalov, and Lvov: whilst two days subsequently the first Provisional Government, with Miliukov for its Minister of Foreign Affairs and Gutchkov for its Minister of War, was created. Unfortunately with that Government there materialized a purely revolutionary organ. This was the *Soviet* of Workers and Soldiers, an affair made up of remnants of the old proletarian unions of 1905: and its function was to keep an eye upon the new Provisional Government, and if necessary, if the straight road ahead should be departed from, to take its place. Inevitably, when, as happened, the Provisional Government began to weaken through internal strife and conflict of opinion, it became more than ever pestered with demands from revolutionaries sure of their immunity, and from soldiers beside themselves, and, though constantly jettisoning ballast for its lightening, and as constantly crying out that presently the Romanovs and the empire would be lying prone for ever, and as constantly trumpeting "the accomplishment of a bloodless revolution," drove steadily onward towards destruction upon the rocks. In Nabokov's memoirs (I am referring to a well-known politician-publicist who was murdered in Berlin by Russian monarchists) we read:

All through that March I, for one, believed something great, something almost holy, to be taking place in our midst. I believed the people at last to have sloughed their chains, and laid tyranny low. As yet I had not grasped the fact that the events of the day came, rather, of sedition engendered by three years of warfare—that the seed sown during those years had brought forth an anarchism destined utterly to ruin the country.

Further demands yet then came from the now unshackled masses. For abolition of military discipline, for banishment of the imperial family, and for unconditional surrender to them of the land did they clamour: until, at once harried and unfit to wield the

power for which they had recently been shouting, but anxious yet to conceal their nervousness and impotence, the members of the existing *bourgeois* Government fell back upon spating floods of false and hollow oratory. For long past many had wished to see the political regime undergo radical alterations: but not a soul amongst those persons had ever been able to evolve a concrete idea as to the form to be assumed by the alterations, or as to how the alterations were to be attained. Mostly such persons had expected to see a change come of a *révolution de palais*. Well, certainly there did hover in the air of Tsarskoe Selo, just before the revolution took place, a palace plot for Nicholas's dethronement, whilst at the same period certain members of the General Staff meditated a *coup d'état* for the empress's expulsion, and certain bolder spirits yet reviewed the feasibility of creating a federal republic; but few conceived that the upheaval would ultimately originate from below, and be worked up by revolutionary soldiery into a complete recast of the socio-political order.

After Nicholas's abdication (which took place at Pskov) he returned to Tsarskoe Selo and his family. In the first instance his abdication was in favour of his son—he signed and handed a deed to that effect to General Russki, chief of the Pskovian military sector; but that was before delegates from the *Duma* arrived to dispel Nicholas's dream of retirement to Livadia until his son should be fitted to assume independent rule. For on the delegates' arrival everything became changed. It did so still more when the Tsar had a conversation with his Court physician, Professor Fedorov. Plainly, with no mincing of words, the professor told Nicholas that an abdicated sovereign were better out of his country than in it, and that in any case the Provisional Government would never entrust him with the Tsarevitch's education for rule—rather it would require

a complete separation between the two. The Tsar then cancelled his original deed of abdication, and, instead, handed to Gutchkov, the *Duma's* principal delegate, a deed signifying his abdication in favour of the Grand Duke Michael, his brother, with, seemingly, the illegality of the proposal never occurring to the imperial mind.

On 3 April, garbed in a tightly buttoned-up smock, and looking very much like a workman out for a holiday, Kerenski paid a visit to Tsarskoe Selo. After making the usual sort of revolutionary speech to the palace's staff of soldiers and domestics he addressed himself to Count Benckendorf, Grand Marshal of the Court, and with curt, iron inflexibility intimated that the next person whom he must see was the empress's intimate friend, Madame Vyrubov. And when she sent out word from her room that she was ill and could not admit him, he nevertheless made his way to her with the announcement that he was charged to forward her to Petrograd. And having obtained from a doctor a declaration that she was fit to travel, he duly dispatched her thither.¹ Next, he went to visit the imperial couple themselves, who had been awaiting his coming in their children's schoolroom. As he entered he halted for a moment, pulled a sort of a bow, and, at first scarcely intelligible through nervousness, named himself as the new Minister of Justice, and added that, as the Queen of Denmark had just telegraphed to the Provisional Government concerning the empress's health, he should be glad to know what answer the Provisional Government was to return. Upon that Doctor Botkin informed the minister on the empress's behalf that, though chronically subject to heart hypertrophia, her Majesty at least was as well as any one in her grievous position could be expected to be. And then Kerenski asked the Tsar to pass with him into the next room, as he had something private to say. Later the Tsar recounted

¹ She was subsequently lodged in the Petropavlovski Fortress.

the details of the interview to Benckendorf. The gist of Kerenski's communication had been that, as the Tsar's ex-ministers, when examined before the Revolutionary Committee, had for the most part justified themselves by citing imperial orders and ministerial reports, and those orders and reports could not now be found, would he, the Tsar, be so good as to search his papers in case the said orders and reports still existed? In speaking of this, the Tsar seemed to make light of the affair, but Benckendorf at once told him that the papers must be looked for, and also that selection of competent counsel must be considered, since what the Revolutionary Committee probably had in mind was to involve the Tsar personally in the scope of its inquiries, or even to have him arraigned outright.

Events then moved quickly in proportion as Kerenski and the Provisional Government became more and more subordinate to the *Soviet* of Workers and Soldiers. First Miliukov was dismissed as too moderate. Then the extremer section of the Government demanded the empress's separation from her husband, "so that she may be prevented from hatching any sort of a counter-revolutionary plot." And Kerenski thereupon had to pay the Tsar a second visit, and tell him that thenceforth the empress was to reside in a separate wing, and to meet her husband only at prayers or at meal times, when the officer of the revolutionary guard could be present. Kerenski also, it is said, was for separating the empress from her children, and desisted from the suggestion only when Madame Narishkin pointed out to him its useless cruelty.

Then the situation at Tsarkoe Selo grew more and more painful for the imperial family. For one thing, the soldiers doing duty there were not really military men, but only men whom the *Soviet* of Workers and Soldiers had put into uniform for the purpose of watching the imperial establishment, and reporting its every act

and word. Also, daily the commanders of these men had to see the two ex-sovereigns personally, and then certify that they were still present. Once an ex-sergeant-major of the imperial army who was acting as such a commander refused to take the Tsar's hand when offered him. "No, no!" he shouted. Not for any consideration in the world!" Mildly the Tsar looked at him. Then he said: "But what have you against me?" For a moment the man stood with jaw dropped. Then, without another word, he wheeled about and departed. Next, though hitherto, on going out into the garden, the Tsar had always been used to greet the men on duty, and they had grudgingly replied as they pressed about him in their dirty uniforms, there came a day when they requested him to desist from the practice of speaking to them, and from offering their officers his hand, since their regiment had begun to accuse them of "servility." Meanwhile the Tsarevitch was looked after by two ex-Guards non-commissioned officers. And when, on an occasion when the empress's footman had to be absent, the two took his place in wheeling the empress about the garden in her chair their regimental *soviet* promptly arraigned them too for "servility," and sentenced them permanently to wear the imperial livery.

Then came July. Early in the month Kerenski informed the Tsar that, as it was inexpedient for the imperial family longer to remain in residence at Tsarskoe Selo, seeing that the Bolshevik Party was steadily acquiring influence, and his own position was threatened, he, the Tsar, and his family must make preparations for a departure. Upon that the Tsar begged to be allowed to go to Livadia, but Kerenski would not commit himself beyond repeating the instruction as to preparations. The actual destination turned out to be the town of Tobolsk, in eastern Siberia. But Tobolsk, again, was only a halt on the family's road to Calvary, for the Bolsheviks no sooner gained power completely than

they forwarded the captives from Tobolsk to Ekaterinburg, and lodged them in the villa of an engineer named Ipatiev, a dwelling known thenceforth, in Bolshevik-official jargon, as "the house of special appointment." And there the family continued constantly to be guarded by sentries and spies, whilst, in addition, its members might neither receive visitors, nor attend the neighbouring church, nor show themselves at the windows. In fact, on an occasion when the Grand Duchess Olga tried to open a casement for fresh air she was fired upon by a sentry posted below. What really caused all this was, probably, the Bolsheviks' genuine dilemma as to what to do with their prisoners, for on the one hand they feared a local rising, and on the other they feared attempts at escape. Once, indeed, they considered a plan of having the Tsar brought to Moscow, and put formally upon trial, with Trotski as Government prosecutor; but further reflection showed the scheme to be inadvisable. Then the Bolsheviks decided to put the family altogether out of the way. First an ostensible pretext was sought. It was found in Koltchak's nearer and nearer approach to the town. Then the Commissar of Ekaterinburg was sent for, and suitably instructed. Then, after his return to his post, the guard on duty was changed—there replaced it, on 4 July, a squad of specially chosen "Chekists"¹ and Hungarian prisoners of war under a man named Urovski. Lastly the imperial family was, during the night of the 16th, taken down to the dwelling's lower story, on the excuse that, as street firing might occur that night, the upper story would be rendered unsafe, and lodged in a cellar the one window of which, heavily grated, was masked from the view of the street with a tall palisading.

And in that cellar the emperor, the empress, their

¹ Employees of the Che-Ka, of the Chrezvychainaia Komissia, or "Extraordinary Commission." The form "Che-Ka" is made up of the names of the full-length title's two initial letters.

four children, Doctor Botkin, and the valet, chambermaid, and cook of the family were butchered with revolvers and bayonets. Then, the butchering over, the butchers conveyed the bodies to a forest spot known as "The Four Brothers," stripped them of all clothing (a proceeding which, incidentally, brought to light the fact that the grand duchesses had all along been carrying jewellery concealed upon their persons), and effected their destruction with fire and sulphuric acid, before throwing the few portions which were not, or could not, be consumed down a disused mine shaft.

Yet the truth soon leaked out. It leaked out the same night, for soon after midnight the occupant of a house opposite happened to go out of doors, and was led later to testify before the *juge d'instruction* appointed by Koltchak as follows: "Just after midnight I went outside. Suddenly I heard about fifteen shots. Fired almost simultaneously these shots were. Then I heard three or four separate shots. All of them seemed to be revolver shots, and to come from Ipatiev's house, but with a dull sound, as though fired in the cellar. And twenty minutes later I heard a motor vehicle leave the house, but could not say what direction it took."

For four days, until the 20th of the month, the guards over "the house of special appointment" were still kept posted—evidently to give the impression that the dwelling's former inhabitants still were within. Then, as Koltchak approached nearer to the town, the Bolsheviks began upon an evacuation of the latter, but, before finally departing, placarded the streets that "during the night of the 16th instant the sentence of death passed upon ex-Tsar Nicholas was carried into effect, and the ex-empress and her children removed to a place of safety." The latter lie remained undetected for quite a little while, but it became unmasked when Koltchak bade M. Nicholas Sokolov institute an inquiry, and the inquiry elicited the fact that amongst the

documents just seized at the local telegraph office there had been a copy of a telegram in cipher which, though defying interpretation at first, had at length been discovered to read: "To Gorbunov, Secretary, Council of People's Commissaries, Kremlin, Moscow. Confirmation of text. Inform Sverdiev that rest of family suffered same penalty as head. Officially, perished during evacuation."

Something else too did Koltchak's searchers find. On the wall of the cellar of execution they found written in an unknown hand:

Balsazar wurde, in selbiger Nacht,
Von seinen Knechten umgebracht.¹

¹ "In that night was Belshazzar slain by his slaves."

THE END

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